

I would say, really, at any point now.

So I really felt that I wanted to retire early, not because the job was terrible, because the job was really good. And later, you retire at a tougher time of retirement, and I did not have a tough time in retirement. And I had a good pension with the company. So I had an easy way to retire.

I always wanted to move to the West Coast with my family. So I've missed my family for all those years. So at 58, I called it quits. I still continued for a year and a half. I couldn't get out for another year and a half, but then eventually I retired.

And I got involved in a lot of local things and everything from Holocaust, which I'm not that deeply involved now, Jewish Federation, Jewish Family Children's Services, Jewish Federation here in the city for locations, a temple.

I did not go into secular different organizations, but I used to be in Ohio and be involved in mental health quite deeply. But it's different if you're in a community, and a lot of people know you, you get involved more-- other than Jewish things. I'm here mostly involved in Jewish things.

I'll get to that. I want to get back to what we were talking about in the camp and the feelings there and what life was like. What about your mother? What kind of presence or force was she in the family?

She was a uniting force, but not a leadership force.

Mhm.

In other words, we knew--

You're the one who took care of things, I guess, of physical things.

That's correct. That's right, but she was not the leadership role. A mother is the same thing. A mother suffered for every little fingernail that breaks on a child's finger, she suffers from it. My brother was taken away. That's not concentration camp, but when he was taken away in the concentration camp, when he was beaten up, how would any mother feel about her son?

At that time, he was 19 or 20 years old. And she nursed his bruises and so forth. And there are a lot of-- I'm sure she looked at me and she didn't like what she saw and she suffered with it.

I was, at that time, 16 years old. I remember vividly, I had rubber boots. I got a hold of some rubber boots. This was the best I could get. And I stepped on a nail that was in a board or something sticking up, and I got it very deep in my foot.

Well, obviously, I had a mother. I had this call to complain to her. And later, I thought, what was this, what good was this? What can she do? But the first impulse, you go to your mother, which I did.

Were you able to get a shot for that? Or was that-- you just were lucky and survived?

The tetanus shot is only prevention. Everybody doesn't need a tetanus shot whenever you scratch yourself. But here, everything is all the prevention. We are insured, and over-insured, and double-insured. And we think this will--

Assure us.

--make everything straight. It doesn't always.

No.

But over there, you didn't worry about it. I was lucky in one respect. There was a lot of typhoid in the camp. And probably 90% of people took ill. Some died, but most of them survived. I was lucky never to get typhoid even at camp. So I look back and I said, I was lucky with so many things in my life, who but myself should do something for others as we go on in life? So I was always involved in doing things.

What about your brother? What kind of force was he in the family?

I think my brother was sort of a rebellious individual. Not rebellious, [? odd-- ?] rebellious, resisting, resenting the Germans, resenting. He was at the prime of his life, 18 years, 19 years, when a young man wants to do something, wants to show himself. He was restrained by my family not to be too daring.

Not to join the resistance?

Not to join the resistance. Not to do things that he would have wanted to do. Whether that was peer pressure, whether it was his own desire, it's difficult for me to identify. I just know that he was always restrained, and he suffered from it.

And the biggest restrain was my sister, my mother, and my father also, but more sister and mother. And I think he resented the idea that he couldn't do what his friends were doing. And one of his friends got killed in the partisans one of his closest friends.

So I think he suffered from seeing me suffer, but he resented the idea just to suffer in silence. You know how you feel, you would like to get out screaming, tearing, fighting, and he couldn't. This was his biggest problem, as I can recall right now. This is 45-plus years, but this is what I remember about him.

And what about you? What was your [INAUDIBLE] at the time?

I was really sliding along with things. I must have felt somewhat secure that the family is always around me, because they save me here, they save me there. I helped myself. In other words, I didn't depend on them helping me. If I wasn't entrepreneurial, I was at least somebody that-- I always was sharp, what's going on, and I could find my way.

But I was passive in a way that I always depended the family's there with me to make decisions I don't have to make. I might have to make the decision that there is a long line and I'm hungry, how do I get closer to the line. Because the family wouldn't survive, wouldn't help me survive in the line. So the immediate things, I took care of myself. The long-range sort of depended. I'm being swept along, and I didn't resent it. It was a good feeling to me.

It's wonderful that you had your family there. I mean, that was so rare.

This is very rare. As I said, I remember very few families. There might have been four families. And my friend, that I told you, also had the whole family with him. And the mother was taken out in 1943 to be shot. And she was shot at the cemetery. So that family went by the wayside as a whole family.

Our family was, till the last day, and I have a whole family. And then there were others, like cousins, that sort of stayed with us also, because we were a family. And we were the center, and they were always with us.

So I'm sure there were different feelings that different people had. I remember, as I said, my feelings. I tried to make the best of today, not worry about tomorrow. That's not the same thing I'm doing right now. Because right now, I'm probably planning until after I die and then a few hundred years more. I'm exaggerating, but I'm saying I am continuously planning. I always have done it.

But that's when I became independent, it was when I married. I felt it's up to me and I don't rely on the family. Even so, I did rely on the family that, in case of emergency, there is a family. Like, for instance, when my kids were born, I didn't worry much what would happen, because I knew my sister would take care of them. So I did rely on the family. We were close-knit as a family.

But then I'm also an individual that likes to be his own person. Whether one is a reflection of the other is difficult to isolate, but I know that I do plan constantly ahead. It was no big surprise I'm going to retire early. I planned it for many years. And again, for the same reason, not to retire early because afraid of work, but to be able to change so I don't have a problem retiring.

A lot of people I see, a lot of people have tremendous problems when they have to retire. Can't find themselves. They're bored. I'm anything but bored. I have more things to do. But you have to enjoy these things. Someone who will be bored, and they won't do anything to help themselves in that. It's difficult.

Well, certainly, as a survivor, you've learned skills about how to be all right. And I want to go back to the day that you were freed. Tell me, describe to me that day.

Well, the night, as I told you, we left at night. The camp, marching, thousands of people marching through the gate that we never could go through. And--

And the guards are all gone?

No, there was no German, only Ukrainian. We were guarded by Ukrainians. And we went out, what they called, the colony. The colony was next to the camp, and the Germans, the management, lived there. So there were many, many houses, well-equipped with food and everything. And the first thing we did is go to one of those houses. This was past midnight.

To get some food?

To get anything. I mean, clothing, food, bedding, whatever. And all I remember, I kept eating stuff, and I couldn't open my can of sardines that I found. First of all, we cleaned up whatever was leftover on the plates. Some of them left the dinner, in the middle of the dinner and ran away.

Wait, this was a day before?

No. The day before, they ran away. But at night, after we left, there was still--

No, I know, but they had run away--

The day before.

--just a few hours before?

A few hours before, right, at dinnertime. Because Russians were on the outskirts, so they ran. And in one place that we went in, there were still the tables set up. And parts of the food was on the plates, so I cleaned up plates, I remember.

I found a can of sardines. I couldn't open it, but there was a knife. I jammed it. I still remember with my fingers, I pulled out whatever I could to eat. And then I found sugar. I stuffed myself with sugar. And that I didn't get sick is just a miracle. I just ate, ate, ate, ate.

Then we started packing up things, because we knew were not going to stay there. We had to leave. So we stayed there, and rested, and talked, and were watchful and hoping the Germans don't come back. If they come back right now, goodbye, they will just kill us. There was no reason to worry about it. They would kill everybody.

And then by the time the first light, which was probably 8:00 over there in the morning, we packed up. Everyone took a sheet, a bed sheet, and put in whatever we could put in it and carried it on our backs and went to town. Where do you go to the--

What did you put in?

Bedding, clothing, everything. We had nothing, so whatever hit your fancy. And some were probably stupid things, but you put them in. You just grabbed, because there were many people grabbing different things. So whatever you grabbed is yours. And we walked out of the town. Where do you go? You don't have a place to go. Our place where we lived is occupied by Poles.

In a small ghetto?

No, big ghetto. The small ghetto was a small place. In the big ghetto, we had a spacious apartment. We knew we cannot go back. The person that lives there, you cannot chase them out. You're not going to start another war.

But then we thought that there were enough Germans living in town. And we just went from place to place, finding out where Germans are. And then we found the Germans left this apartment, so we went in. That's where we lived. And--

In which town?

In Czestochowa.

In your old town?

Yeah, not shtetl, not the small town, but the big--

In the old villages.

And when we came there, we slept that night in our clothing. It was one year watching over, they are coming back, and maybe we have to run with the Russians. We knew if they come back, we'll go with the Russians, regardless what they do. We're not going to stay there.

And the night went by, and the Germans didn't come back, so one good day. And we watched for the next day. And meantime, we went out of town to see what we can get. It wasn't a question of buying. No money was available. It's just go-- what can you open up? And we went to different stores. And different stores were-- the German stores that they -- and we raided them and took whatever we could. That was the beginning.

My father, on the third or fourth day, when we knew that the Russians are here to stay and the Germans are out, went to some of the bakers that owed us money from before the war and said, I know you cannot pay me back right now. You owe me money, remember. Give me bread.

So we, all of a sudden, had breads from this bakery, and this baker, and, all of a sudden, what we had is a commodity, bread. So this was the beginning where my father could trade bread for something else. And somebody had meat, and somebody had butter.

And so all of a sudden, life started to come back to not normal, but come back to some different way of living than concentration and waiting for the soup in the morning, or the coffee or whatever. Coffee wasn't coffee. Coffee was-- you know what ersatz is? Substitute. That's the German word was "substitute."

Everything was a ersatz. Everything was a substitute. Coffee was made out of grain, burnt grain that was coffee. Tasted like ink, but was the best you had. When they served us soup in the evening, it was some little bit of some flour thrown into water. Not even salted, but it was better than nothing.

But here, we started getting back. And then I remember, even so, we never ate a-- a rabbit in our life. Someone of us, maybe my brother or someone got hold of a rabbit. And we cooked it, and it was sweet. It was the first time we eat meat after a long, long while.

Life started coming back. and started living a life, would depend on yourself and try to do for yourself. And then

problems started for Jews in Poland again, because the Poles did kill Jewish people.

After the war? I didn't know.

Yeah. That's why I was starting to say Escape From Sobibor. Was it Sobibor? That was the film. Did you ever see the film?

No, I never saw it.

Well, this is like a Treblinka, was a Sobibor, and there was an escape. There was a massive escape. A lot of people got killed, but some people survived. One of the survivors eventually got killed by a Pole that came through the door and shot him straight in the head and walked away. So there was a lot of that going on. We knew we--

Is that the one where they walked out? I saw a film like that.

No, they didn't walk out. They escaped. They killed a few Germans, and they took their rifles and started--

Yeah, I think I saw that film.

Yeah, that was Escape From Sobibor, yeah. One of those escapees was killed later by a Pole after the war. And it wasn't one. There were hundreds of such things, incidences. We knew we cannot stay in Poland.

So did you see this, though? And was it your experience that you saw this or how--

No.

Why were you so afraid? Was it--

Because we knew that the Poles hated us. My brother-in-law, present brother-in-law, who went to Russia, like some of those people did go to Russia-- and he's four years older than I am-- he became a Polish soldier under the Russians, the Polish army that was fighting the Germans. And he went to Berlin. And he was part of taking Berlin also.

And then he returned to his town. And a guy that had a horse and buggy-- this is like a taxi in Poland-- took him. He wanted to go to the place where his house was to see it. And he is an officer in the Polish army. The guy looks at him. Don't I know you, he says. Ah, you're [PERSONAL NAME] aren't you? The Germans didn't kill you, did they?

I mean, that's the kind of attitude. Now, how come they didn't kill you? It's hard to imagine. We came back to Poland, there was-- it was no rejoicing by the Poles. It was, gee whiz, they didn't kill them all after all.

So there were a lot of very unpleasant things in Poland, so we knew we were going to have to leave. And eventually, my father bought passports for us, which made us German Jews, and we went back to Germany.

Wow. How long were you--

In Poland?

--out of the camp before you went to Germany?

I was out-- we went out January 17. We left Poland in end of April, more or less. Because we first went to Breslau or Wroclaw, whichever. It's a German town which is right now under the Poles. There, we waited until so-called German people will leave for West Germany. And we supposedly were West Germans.

To make a point about the Poles, we arrived in the English zone in West Germany with the transport of train. Polish soldiers from the National Army-- National Army was the right-wing group that was in England fighting. The Polish

military unit was under English-- was taking care of that camp, bringing in the German people.

And somebody got a whiff of it there, that they are Polish people, not German people. And they arrested us, those lousy Poles, and kept us 24 hours without food, without any information until word got to the [INAUDIBLE] English zone. And he made a protest to the military, and they immediately released us. They were going to send us back to Poland. This--

What was the logic behind that?

We cheated. There is no logic. They were Jews, lousy Jews. They are escaping from Poland. So those are the conditions under which we lived. I'm not trying to make excuses for Germans, but the base of Poles was not the best base either.

Well, you've been very kind here. I mean, you must hate the Poles.

I'm not sure I hate them. I don't want to have much to do with them. The closest I have something to do with a Pole right now is my nephew by marriage. He's a Catholic. I have a very good relationship with him.

This is the woman who--

Yeah, she was brought up Catholic. I mean, you cannot-- there's nothing to-- there's no comment to make. That's what it is. She's Catholic.

But she's Jewish.

She's Jewish by birth, right. But, no, as far as treatment and relationship, it's just like any member of the family. But we cannot be invited. We won't be invited for Christmas, because I wouldn't want to go for a Christmas celebration. But she's quite often taking part in Passover celebrations with us and different things. So it's our probably reluctance to start getting into Christianity.

So you went to Germany. There was no other place to go besides Germany?

From Poland? No. You had to go to West Germany because it was the easiest place to go. From West Germany, there were embassies. You could go to Australia. That was before the Jewish state was found in 1948. After '48, people went to Israel quite a bit. But before then, going to Israel was, again, on smuggling by ship. You've seen Exodus, I assume, or have you, the film?

Mhm.

And so this is the sort of thing that was going on. You could go, and sometimes you wound up in Cyprus. I have friends that wound up in Cyprus for a year, because they wouldn't let them in.

Mhm.

So here again, from camp to camp. But people went to Australia, Canada, United States.

So you went to West Germany. Where did you go? Was there a camp there?

Once we came in, Jewish agencies would take over and help you. And they placed us in a hotel. And it was called Bad Harzburg, which is a resort place. And the hotels were not occupied at that time still.

So they got a bunch of hotel rooms and put us in and provided us some food. And was the idea that we were going to go down to Munich, which was the American zone. There were better situations existing in American zones as far as getting out from the United States, from Germany.

And then a few weeks later, we went down to Munich. And in Munich, they placed us in DP camps, displaced peoples camps. And a few months later, I met my wife there within a few weeks, present wife. She was just a young girl.

And I started training myself as an auto mechanic through ORT. if you're familiar with ORT. That's the Jewish Agency that, throughout the world, continues to help people get into professions and teaching and so forth. And they were starting, setting up schools, different schools for young people, so they get prepared for when they leave.

I started to become a mechanic. I remember at that time, that girlfriend, my present wife, kept telling me that I should do better things, that I could study and so forth. I said, look, I never finished high school and so forth. And then this goes on for days and days of discussion.

And finally, she talked me into going to Munich and trying to get into a school, high school, or no high school. So they sent me for a test. Don't ask me how I passed the test. It wasn't much of a test. And I get a certificate that I am qualified to go to college. And I went to college and became an engineer. It was great difficulties, but I did it.

Where did you go to college? In Munich?

In Munich, yeah.

So you were there?

I was in a camp outside Munich, 80 miles south of Munich. It's called Bad Reichl another resort place. And she, my wife or girlfriend at that time, talked me into going to Munich.

So you were in this camp for four years?

No, I was not. I was a few months in that camp, went to Munich and stayed in Munich.

Oh, I see.

My folks were in that camp. And then in 19-- this was 1946. So in September or October 1946, I was already in school, and then I finished in 1950.

And when did your parents leave the camp?

Parents left the camp in 1950 also.

So they were in the camp four years, huh?

Yeah. And they moved to the city, in the same town, the city. They rented a place, and they already had a means of making a living. And I kept traveling back and forth to see them every weekend or second weekend from school. Eventually, I graduated and came to the United States. My friend who-- go ahead.

Yeah, I just want to go back. You met at the--

Camp.

--camp. How-- did you speak German? How could you [BOTH TALKING]

I spoke a little German, but not technical German. I went to school and sat there like you would sit on a Greek mass. Have you ever witnessed a Greek mass?

Well, it's like the Catholic mass.

No, but you don't-- they use Greek, and you don't understand Greek.

Right, yeah.

And that's what it was for me for the first few days.

How did you pass this test?

I didn't. A young man from Germany, a German who was a POW in Texas, noticed that I'm struggling. And my wife was with me too, by the way. At that time, not my wife, my girlfriend. She also decided to go and take. And she passed, somehow, the test too without high school. She had a little more than I had. Besides, she was self-taught. She taught herself quite a bit in her life and always continues [INAUDIBLE].

So we were there, and we just struggled very badly. And he came over to us and he says, look, I was a POW in Texas. When I went, Americans just treated me wonderfully. I think America's a wonderful place to be. I promised myself I want to help someone. I see-- I know you're Jewish people, and so forth. I want to help you get through the tough time.

And he was teaching us, tutoring us, took us home. And his mother, as bad as food was very scarce, he would serve us some food, coffee, which was almost unavailable, but they had some. So he was the one that gave us-- pulled us through.

A German guy?

A German guy, yeah.

How old was he?

He must have been three years older than I was.

So this is one of the just Christians, you think?

He was very open. He says, look, I was-- he was a German, and he felt German. But when he came to Texas, when he saw how the American people treated him. Do you know they took POWs to help here in war. When our men were in Europe, they had here German people go on farms and go in different places and do the work that needed to be done, mostly farms.

And he said, I had the best time of my life there. And they were so nice, the Americans. I was an enemy, and they treated me like a human being. He says, I want to give this back somehow. There's an opportunity here to help you. He just did it.

So he helped. And the first year, I didn't make it. I went back to give me one more chance, and they-- from there on, it was no problem. I came. When I graduated, I was on top of the class. But it was difficult because the language, the lack of--

You had to learn a language, huh?

Language, also lack of preparation. I had about 7 and 1/2 grades. That's not enough to go to college.

No, as I don't see how you passed the test.

I didn't. The first year, I didn't. I asked them for another chance.

I mean, to get even admitted. You have to pass a test--



That was a silly thing. They sent us to a Jewish agency. And the guy would ask us, do you know Latin? Yes, I know Latin. I happen to know Latin because I took two years or three years of Latin. Do you know algebra? I know algebra.

If he would ask me, do you know trigonometry, I wouldn't know what he's talking about. It just-- it was one of the so -- you want to go to college? Go ahead. Let's go. And the Germans honored it because they were very tenuous relationships, you now? So I got in.

And your wife, she also [BOTH TALKING]

Same thing. Same test. Same thing.

What did she study?

She did not finish because she left to the United States in November of '47. So she went to school for a little while, and then she quit and went to United States.

And where did she go in the United States?

She went to New York, in Bronx.

And your parents left in '50?

'51. I left with them together.

They waited for you to get through school?

Well, it wasn't easy to get into the United States.

Uh-huh.

In 1950, Truman got the Congress to pass a law, by his request, to admit, I don't know how many, let's say a quarter of a million displaced people to the United States. And at that time, they opened up the requirements.

The requirements being that if you-- the first requirements, if you were not in '45 in Germany, you couldn't get out. I came in at '46. So the second requirement was that people up to, let's say, '47 can still go to the United States. So I qualified, and I applied. And a year later in April of '51, I came over to the United States.

So you left with your family?

And I left with my father and mother.

And what about your sister? Where was she?

They went on their own. Eventually, we got all together, but that's the way I could only work out enough to keep my parents together with me, because they needed me to guide them. My mother would not have been able to go through these things, the papers and so forth. My father was already half blind. So I took care of them, getting them over here to the United States.

So where did you land in the United States [BOTH TALKING]

I landed in New York. It was the destination of Toledo. And in Toledo, they--

Why Toledo?

The Jewish agencies went out to all places where Jewish people were and says, I need from you a contract for a displaced person. And so they gathered wherever they could gather. Mine was Toledo. I was a mechanic.

He told me, don't be an engineer. Say you're a mechanic, which I was too. I was a mechanic and I was an engineer, a mechanic from camp. And [? suddenly, ?] all I could do is qualify my father, and mother, and myself to the same town. So we left together. I wanted them to be together. I worked on that, and this worked out.

But I didn't stay in Toledo because I already had a promised job in Amherst, Ohio, which is about 80 miles from Toledo. My friend, very close friend, came to Munich. And I was going to college. He says, hi, how are you doing? which just [BOTH TALKING]

You very first friend from the camp?

Yeah.

His mother died?

Yeah.

Yeah?

And he says, what are you doing? And I said, I'm going to school. He says, how can you go to school? I told him, [INAUDIBLE] the test and -- He went. He had more school. He was older than three years. He passed the test and joined me in school, so we were going to all to school together till we finished.

And he went to United States sooner. And after a lot of struggle, he found a job. They liked him very much. And the chairman tells me, the chairman, the one that retired, I told you outside, one of the sons, [INAUDIBLE] they liked him very much.

And he says, you know I have a friend in Germany. He says, and he asked me, does he have -- that's the words of the chairman of my friend-- is he as good as you are? Oh, he's better. So I says, take him. Tell him to come over, whenever he comes. I came in, I didn't have to have a job. Luck. So I'm saying I had a lot of good things happen to me in life. And I didn't have to look for a job. I came in, and I had the job ready in Amherst and stayed with the company.

So when did you meet up with your wife again? She was in New York.

In New York.

And you were in Toledo.

Yeah, we corresponded for 3 and 1/2 years. And we got engaged by letter. when I knew I'm going to come over, we got engaged. And then we got married shortly after I came over. So I still have a little--

That was your first romance, wasn't it?

No. [LAUGHS]

[LAUGHS] But there couldn't have been too many before. I mean--

There were. She's aware of it. It's not known. I had-- well, I had different girlfriends before. And then when I met her, somehow--

In the camp, you had girlfriends?

Sure. And then-- but somehow, I always corresponded with her. Why we were not engaged, nothing serious. We were very good friends. And I had other girlfriends here and there. And then when the time came, I felt that--

And my folks really liked her too. This was important to me that they approved. They liked her very much. And I knew I'm going to come over. I wrote the letter to her, I'd like to get engaged, and we did, and then we got married. It's as simple as that.

So she moved to Toledo or to Amherst with you?

She moved to Amherst, right.

So your parents were in Toledo?

They were in Toledo.

You were in Amherst?

My sister joined them in Toledo, my younger sister. And then my older sister came over with her husband later on.

Right, so they were all in Toledo.

Then they all came from Toledo to Petaluma.

How did they come to Petaluma?

My brother-in-law had some money in Germany, made some money, and he came over. He didn't know the language.

[BOTH TALKING] in Germany. You've got a fantastic family. They make money wherever they are.

Yeah, he is an entrepreneur. I mean, some money. It's not big money. He didn't make millions. But they had enough money where he didn't-- maybe he didn't want to go to work, not speaking the language, what jobs can you get?

So he said, before I learn the language, there's something I can do. Somehow he got into the egg business, chicken business, which didn't last very long. He realizes he's not a farmer. And he's an entrepreneur, so he left a little later, Petaluma, in '57. But those are all the little things. But--

So, of course, if you're an egg person, you go to Petaluma.

Well, he wasn't an egg person, but that was one way. He didn't need the language. He said, I can raise chickens and without they could-- they understand Polish too and Yiddish too.

Chickens.

Chickens, yeah. So that's the way he went about it. And he-- and later on, they left the farm.

But they stayed in Petaluma?

No, they stayed-- they came to the city. They also had a daughter, something similar to what I told you about my father. They couldn't see raising their daughter in Petaluma, or, better yet, they were in Sebastopol. I'm not sure, you know the area?

Sure, of course.

You know Hessel Road? Have you had--

Hessel Road?

Hessel Road.

Yeah.

Between Sebastopol and Petaluma.

Mhm.

And she was going to a one-room school there. And they decided, it was a young girl she was at that time, about 12 or so, and says, we should really raise her in a city. So they moved to the city, left-- didn't leave. They sold it and established themselves in the city.

In San Francisco?

In San Francisco.

And brought your parents too?

No, the parents were always with them. My parents were always was my oldest sister.

So your whole family was here and you were in Ohio?

Yeah, in Ohio.

That must have been difficult.

Well, I visited quite often, as often as I could. But eventually, I wanted to be with the family.

And you married?

Pardon me?

You had how many children?

Three children. Two boys and a girl.

Now I know about one of the boys, who [INAUDIBLE] your grandfather. What's he doing?

He is-- he has a PhD in civil engineering in hydrology. You say, what is hydrology? Well, it's a very esoteric job sort of thing. So he worked for the college in Ohio state for the University of Ohio. And he also does consulting and computer with some small firm. Right now, he's in the process of possibly switching over to a little firm completely, maybe in partnership.

My oldest son has a PhD in economics. And he works for the National Defense University. He is a policymaker and deals with industrial planning in case of warfare, something that we all hope will never be used.

I guess he's planning from you, huh, from his father?

-- they have more on the ball than I have, all of them.

[CHUCKLES]

And my daughter is in-- lives in San Francisco. She has a PhD in chemical engineering, presently working for an environmental consulting firm. So they're on their own, their own vocation.

It sounds like you're doing fine.

Yeah.

So if I were to ask your children how they think that-- because they're these groups for children of survivors because they have problems oftentimes-- if I ask your children what it was like to be raised by two survivors, you and your wife are survivors, what would they tell me some of the problems have been?

They would probably tell you about different hang-ups, like not throwing out food. They're very conscious of it, and they don't either, they don't throw out food. We have not hidden or expounded on the concentration camp or the war.

When they wanted to know, we talked about it freely, but we didn't say, you have to remember I was in concentration camp, or anything like this. They know our history thoroughly. My wife and I both had to be very conscious to let them live a normal life.

You mean to let them go to be--

To let them--

--to trust that they'd be OK in the world and not to be so possessive of them, you mean?

I hope so, I hope so. I think they would probably admit to that, yes. My daughter was once asked as a survivor's child to give a speech at the Holocaust Memorial. And the thing that I remember is the things that she sees that we are conscious of things. We carry the memories, but we have never tried to implant on them. They don't belong to any children of survivors groups.

I think my biggest complaint from my children that I heard about us is that the fact that we were not born here, and when we were in Lorraine, the little town, the other kids might have given them a bad time that their parents are not Americans. That was more than concentration camp or anything like this. This is what I heard mostly about.

Even so, later on, they-- not much big of a difference to the other kids because they all excelled, and they always excel. But as children, children can be very vicious. So I know stories that they would tell me how they hated the fact that the kids were making fun of them that their parents aren't Americans.

Yeah, this had nothing to do with you as a survivor, though, did it?

No, no, just that I'm not an American. I wasn't American-born.

Well, let me ask you, how do you think being a survivor has affected your wife?

The same thing. We don't throw out food. It's not by my decision. It's our decision. We don't do it. I think she likes more security than she would have liked than she would have had if she led a normal life the way she was brought up.

As I told you, they were quite well-off. They had the lumber mills, and they have a big operation. So she never knew any hint of poverty. I think she, right now, likes security a lot more than she would have if she did not go through it. She had the Russian experience. She was not with the Germans. She starved for quite a while.

And you have such little hangups, like certain food, you wouldn't eat if they kill you, not exactly you know what I mean because you had so much of it, you didn't want to look at it. Like, I don't like any substitute, any ersatz.

If I cannot have sugar, I'll have but I'll eat -- I'm not going to use anything artificial. None. I'm not sure if a doctor tells me you have to do this to survive, it's something else. But for the taste, I can do without anything. If it isn't real, I don't want it. Maybe I'm lucky I'm not getting fat. I want to change my diet.

[LAUGHS] So how do you think your-- if I ask your wife that question, how your experience affected you, what would she say?

I think she would say, number one, the preservation of food. I'm not security-conscious, but I think I'm so -- I'm enough security-conscious, but I'm more risk-taking.

It's got to be hard to take risks after that kind of experience, I think.

You do it. As I said, you can go either way. You can be very conservative or very risky.

Uh huh.

I've talked to a physician that survived the war. He's younger than I am. And he says, for a long time, he had sort of a death wish attitude in life. Erase everything that's dangerous appealed to him. So it can go either way.

Yeah, that's right.

I don't think things that are dangerous appeal to me. I think I take sufficiently precaution in things. I think I plan-- I'm not sure, but I think I plan because I enjoy the fact that I can plan. So nothing's 100%, but you live on the edge so long, then finally said, wouldn't it be wonderful to think that I can prepare a meal for next day or something?

Yeah.

I remember the wish, sitting in the camp, I remember on a little hill overlooking the barbed wire, seeing lights going on in private houses and thinking what a wonderful thing it must be when you put a tablecloth on a table, you sit down and eat a hot soup. I mean, this was the ultimate wish of desire.

But after you have the soup, you still require, want other things. I think it affected me not the war, maybe, but because of things that happened to me, the good things that I feel I need. It's not an obsession. It's not I feel I need it, I should help others. I do, and have done it for a long time, but it could be my own personality. It's hard to differentiate.

It's [? good ?] to see the way you see your life as looking at all the lucky things that happened to you more than the unlucky things. I mean, it's really a very--

Well, the only unlucky thing that happened to me, I went to a concentration camp, and I lost my brother. There are unlucky things. But I'm talking while I'm alive and I'm here, a lot of good things did happen to me.

Yes, I mean--

Bringing up three children that turned out to be normal is quite a lucky thing too.

Yes. But, I mean, some people could see the concentration camp as the horrible thing in their life and not see the lucky things. So it's really interesting to talk to--

I still see the concentration camp as a terrible thing.

Yes, but, I mean-- but still, you talk about how in terms of survival, you were lucky, right?

Yeah, many times.

So it's this attitude which is so positive. And I think it's--

I wouldn't know what to attribute. Maybe personality, I don't know. I'm not a negative person.

No, obviously not, even after all the experience you had.

Would I wish anybody to live through the kind of life I had in my early years? Absolutely not. It's terrible. It's beyond any discussion.

But the interesting question is whether--

But out of this, when you come out, it reminds me of the-- the trials and tribulations of Pauline. Was there such a-- do you remember there was a cartoon where the woman constantly goes through all those-- it's one of those serials where she constantly is in bigger danger and she comes out of it, or some of the modern films that they made with-- what you call it the Jewels of the Nile.

The Perils of Pauline? Is that what you--

Yeah, Perils of Pauline. Yeah. And when you look at it and you go through these things and you survive, how can you not say it's a good thing? How can you not say it's a good thing that 95% of people come to the United States, and for the first few months, there's nothing but misery trying to find a job? I go in and I select a job as a professional without speaking the language.

And I can tell you many, many other things. I worked for people that are the most wonderful people. When I retired, there was a party given by the officers and the board of directors. I was an officer of the company. I was, for a Jewish person coming from the old countries, not all too bad.

And making a speech that one of the things that occurred to me is the most worthwhile thing about my total career is that in all my career, I did not have to jeopardize my integrity once because I worked for such nice people.

You're in business, you're a vice president, you more than often have to sacrifice your integrity, and people do. I was lucky not to have to do it. If that's not life, that's not luck, what is? Going through a career without-- I had retained my self-respect. That's luck.

Well, it's just interesting that-- to think about the question that this experience you've been through, you still come out of it being a positive person. And so you wonder whether somebody-- you wonder sometimes whether you take a positive person and you give them a horrible experience and they become negative. Maybe it doesn't happen that way. Positive people stay positive, and maybe negative people stay negative. Good things can happen to negative people and they'll still be right? So--

I am wondering whether this might not have something to do, how-- at what point are you broken? I don't think I was broken at any one point. Do you know what I'm talking--

Yes.

Breaking, where you say, that's it, I don't want it anymore, I don't want to live. Even then, when I was being hit over the head, I said, when is he going to hit me from the other side? I mean, that's-- I'm not a negative person by nature, but I don't think that--

I'll tell you another little story. When I was taken out with my mother and father and put away to send away, remember I told you the story from [? Birkenau ?] 150 people to send them away for the execution.

Yes.

And I was staying in that police station in two little rooms where people had to find themselves, where to lie down. It was cramped and so forth. I didn't want to die hungry. The father of my niece, the Gentile, the new father, came to the window because he had a lot of pull all over. He says, can I help you with something? He was the Christian.

Uh huh.

That's the new father to my niece.

Uh huh.

And my folks asked me, would you like something? I said, I would like to get the bread. And he brought the bread for me. I took the bread, and I had a long coat which was very oversized. And I had the bread under my coat. And I kept eating little pieces, and my parents never forgot it. I just didn't want to die hungry. What does this mean? I don't know. I'm not sure-- I don't think I was beaten. I knew I'm going to die, but I wanted to make the best of it.

[LAUGHS]

That's all he said. The best of it is not-- no, you can die a different death.

Yes, I think it's wonderful you're going to make the best of it.

Yeah.

Right, yes.

And I don't think I look back an awful lot, not for fear. But this is even today, if something happens, once it's happened, it's no use to go into it. It's done. If you can learn something, you learn. If you don't, go on.

[INAUDIBLE]

If you look back, some of it will catch up with you. Look ahead. That's an attitude. I'm not sure whether it was born out of experience or it's individual. It's hard to-- think a psychiatrist to analyze me. I don't know.

Well, what about your sister? Did you see her change at all, your older sister or your younger sister?

My older sister was a warrior all her life, worrying about her family, but looking positive at things.

And she stayed that way?

She stayed that way, even until she was dying. She came home and she said, I know I have it right on my head, and I don't want to live with that. Life isn't worth living when I-- but she was, under the circumstances, the way people with cancers go through, she was excellent. She worried more about me than herself. So she is positive. The other sister, less positive person. But everyone is different in that respect. And just because you're brother and sister, you're not the same way.

No.

My brother would have been a completely different individual than I am.

And how is your mother now?

She has-- you know what dementia is? Aging dementia? She has aging dementia. And she's getting worse and worse to communicate, but she's in good physical health. I go in several times a week. My sister goes in. She has every day, I visitor there in the home.



It was a funny incident. I always go dressed up when I go to see my mother. The other day, I was going to Ohio. And I had a regular shirt, a sports shirt, a pair of slacks, and gym shoes. And she was a little confused at the end. She kept asking about me without saying my name. And I couldn't tell who she was asking for. I named every relative I could think of. No, nothing.

Finally, I ask her, do you mean me because I don't wear a tie? She says, yes, because I wasn't dressed the same when she was missing me. And little things like this. So whenever I go and visit her, if it's at all possible, I wear a tie and a suit.

Why is that? That's how she knows you?

She gets upset if I'm not properly dressed.

Is that because your father was always--

No, I was also-- no, I would come quite often to visit to California. I would come in a tie and a suit because I would go on business part-time.

But your father was always dressed in a tie and a suit.

My father was always dressed, always. And so she looks at this, and she was missing me. She couldn't express it, says, he's not here. Why isn't he here? Today, I came in-- this was after I came back-- and I said-- because when I got off the plane, I stopped in this week.

And she still wasn't in -- because I had the sweatshirt on, so I don't -- On a plane, I travel very casual. The day I come in, I say, that's the way you like it? She says, yeah, that's the right way. She wants me to wear a tie. So I go in and wear a tie every time.

Mhm.

But she misses her daughter, obviously.

Sounds like everybody does.

Well, even so, her mind is not what it used to be. She still complains where her daughter is.

Did I miss anything? Did you-- is there anything else you want to tell me?

There are a lot of little stories, but it's hard to tell what's of an interest or what is not of interest.

Everything's of interest, really.

You talk of luck. Again, I say lucky. I was lucky where we were men and women in the same camp. Very few camps had men and women. So there was a sort of social life going on, whatever it was. Hard-- hunger, starvation, but there was social life. You were getting together. You walked together. You had to sleep in your own barracks. You couldn't mix.

Even under the worst of conditions, people would want entertainment. I remember somebody got hold of a violin. And he was a good violinist. And we had people watching, so the guard wouldn't approach. And he gave a concert to a number of people, as quiet as you could keep it. And people enjoyed it. It was something sweet listening to a violin. And people always look to better their lives, no matter how bad they are.

I remember the first time I ate non-kosher was when I was in a bakery. And while we had food, all we had was bread and flour, and bread and flour, and bread and flour. A soup from flour and eat bread.

Wait, was this before?

In the camp-- and after the selection, when we were locked up for a few weeks in the bakery, there was no other food. Just flour, and salt, and flour, and other things. And the diet was so-- after a while, while you have enough bread. You cannot stomach anymore those soups out of pure flour and salt.

Yeah.

And somebody came by, one of those cleaning-up men, and they brought a piece of pork sausage. If you would have told me to eat pork sausage before the war, I would have choked at the thought of eating pork sausage. I ate it the first time, and I remember it was sweet. It was very tasty. And I didn't choke on it, a surprising thing.

I had a friend that during the selection, he was from another street, so they were selected like 10 days before we were. He ran away, hid himself out in a patch of tomatoes. That's all he had to eat for about four or five days. And all he could sustain themselves is eat tomatoes.

And then somehow, he made his way, and we saw him. He came to our yard when we weren't selected yet. And, by the way, that guy survived and is in England. But I remember how he was telling me that he'll never touch a tomato in his life. Those are the little things.

The horrors, there were plenty of horrors. I'm not trying to cover them up. I remember them all. I remember the beating. I remember the abuses. I remember the humiliations were worse to me than anything. I never can get used to the humiliation that we went through as a people.

You mean being bossed around all the time?

Abused, abused. Terribly abused. This, to me, was the thing that-- I mean, physical pain is physical pain. You kill people, but I look at it, you're killed, you're dead. But the living abuse bring us down to the level of an animal. Some of us were sheep and some of us were tigers, animal-like. This was terrible. Even as a youngster, I remember this as a very bad situation.

And this was going on constantly. We were less than-- less than an animal. You'd treat a dog better than-- and the beating wasn't as much a physical thing as was, again, the humiliation. And that affected me, probably. And that's why maybe I have a lot of respect for people.

Because when I was with the corporation, even so I was in management, I was very respected by the union people because I would never treat them anything less than I wanted to be treated like. Luckily, I've never had to lie to them, and this meant to me quite a bit.

So those might be fallouts from what I've seen as a terrible thing that can happen to people. I firmly believe that physical abuse is easier to take than humiliation. But when you're brought down to the point where you accept the humiliation and go on with it, that's a terrible thing. No people should have to take these things.

At this point, do you feel that you reach what is this?

It's fine now.

No, no, I mean when you're being abused, there's a point that you feel that you reach where it's no longer just. It becomes intolerant or it becomes--

- It becomes intolerant, yeah, when you're not a human being, when you're not treated like a human being. And I don't care who it is. It's a terrible thing to a human being, because all we have that differentiates us from animal is the ability to understand ourselves and have the self-respect and want the self-respect. And when you take it away, what's the

difference between us and an animal?

It was interesting what you've said before about it took you a long time to understand that when you couldn't kill that guard, that you were just not a murderer--

I was ashamed.

For many years, you say?

That's right.

At what time or what point or how did you resolve that?

I think I must have been about 30. And the reason I resolved that is because I started thinking more than a child would think. I started seeing things in life that have more importance than being a human.

When you're a youngster, you think if you're not brave, that's all that counts in life. And I started understanding that's not what makes us as human beings. What makes us human beings is the ability to feel and not the impulse to kill or be killed, to feel.

And at that time, I started understanding myself better. That was a very mature approach, attitude as I had for those years. And that's when I started telling the story of what happened. And I didn't feel ashamed of it that I was weak.

But you came to that realization yourself?

Yeah, simply by maturing. It takes a maturing period for a person to realize what life is all about. What makes a man assess proverbially assume? I'm talking men versus women. What's the big deal about a man?

Mhm.

Is a woman not a man? I don't mean--

No, I understand what you mean.

--gender. I'm talking as a person.

Right. As a man, meaning human, almost.

I think I would take the attitude of what's important in life is not the masculinity as its proverbially accepted. This, what is a human being? Human being part is worth more than the masculinity in us.

And this is what just impresses me so much talking to you is that you have so much sensitivity and empathy for other people. And I would have thought that would have died somewhere, but it never did for you.

But I would-- I'm not sure what I'm attributing to it. I think it's an individual. I'm not sure. Maybe it is not, but it is individual.

[BOTH TALKING]

You already asked me why I called my wife.

Yeah.

Now, how would she feel if she sits there and doesn't know what happened to me? I told her I'll be an hour and a half

here or something like that.

I know, but this is what so impresses me so. You're--

I think this is normal, should be normal with people.

Yes, but with a lot of us, it's not. And I would have thought that somebody who had been treated so callously and less than human, as you say, would have forgotten those things. somehow that would have--

Well, I was thinking about it quite many, many times, quite a few times. And it's-- I think I opened it up with this statement; some of these things, it's like hardening a steel. If you're familiar with the process of hardening steel, you heat it and you quench it. If you do it successfully, it comes out a very hard, useful tool. If you don't do it the right way, it cracks. Maybe some of us crack and some of us harden.

Uh-huh.

Not harden. Harden meaning the best comes out of it.

Mhm.

You become like a good-treated steel. I'm not sure.

Interesting.

I'm not sure. This is speculation. I'm not a naive person. I don't think I'm a naive person. But I'm not sure that this has anything to do with the war experience or not. I'm sure it has an effect, but it could have been positive or negative. It did not affect me negatively, that I know of.

And what about other people you know as survivors? Do you think that they generally are negative, cynical people, or they are as varied as the ordinary population?

They vary, they vary. I think it's the same thing. It starts with the raw material, and you build on that or deteriorate that part.

Yeah.

So some people have no different attitude than I have towards life. I'm not unique in that respect. There are a lot of people that have that attitude. Some people feel bitter about things. As I said, and, again, I keep repeating almost to the point of ridicule, I was lucky in many ways. Others were not.

Yeah, I'm sure luck has something to do with it.

When you lose the whole family, you're left one by yourself, all of a sudden, you have a different attitude. In my case, I was lucky enough to have most of my family. Sure, I miss my brother. I dreamed about him for years. But it's an individual thing with every one of us.

I was engaged a few weeks ago in overhauling our temple in Petaluma. I undertook it. And I took to raise the money. I took it to do the work and physically work many hours on it. A lot of people helped. I didn't do it myself. A lot of people helped. And when it got all done, I was wondering whether I would have had as much fun going on a nice vacation as I had doing it. Naive. Ridiculous. I don't know, but that's--

But the thing is that you had fun doing it.

Yeah.

You see that you--

I enjoyed it, the achievement.

Yes, that you enjoyed it, that you allowed yourself to enjoy it or whatever. So I think there's something there about giving yourself permission to seeing, making the best out of things.

Yes, I'm trying to make the best out of things, but also, you have to build to understand the importance, what's important to you in life. I can take one more trip and go to Timbuktu and come back and say, what was the trip all about? Well, I can tell people that I was in Timbuktu.

That's fine if that's your value in life to brag to other people. But telling people of all your things that you have done, like going on trips, I know a lot of people, their biggest joy is telling others. What do you do it? For jealousy? For impression? What's in it? Well, I've been in many places in the world, a lot of business-related travel.

And the point I was making about the shul, the temple that I worked on, when I was done with it, I was thinking to myself, would I have enjoyed a vacation as much as I enjoyed this? And I seriously questioned whether I would. I've been on vacations [MUMBLES] So it's a question of values. What are values? Where do you have your values?

Have you ever heard of the story-- the guy we are talking of being religious, OK? The guy, that on Yom Kippur, wanted to play golf, and God punished him when he made a hole-in-one. Do you get the gist of it?

No. Explain this. How was that a punishment?

The whole idea of making a hole-in-one is being able to brag to others. But on Yom Kippur, he didn't have any friends with him. He went to the golf course on Yom Kippur.

Oh, I see.

And God punished him and made a hole-in-one. How do you live with it? No one saw it.

[LAUGHS] And some people [BOTH TALKING]

And this is an indication of, very often, what's important. It's not the hole-in-one. It's telling about it, not the hole-in-one.

Right.

Well, that's fine. We need a little bit of this because we need the self-esteem that isn't there that somebody can build up by bragging, but there is a limit to that. And you wonder how secure are we ourselves when we need constantly the praise of others or the admiration of others, not that we don't want it. We admire it, but there's a limitation to that. So who's right? Who's wrong? What's good? What's bad?

No. [INAUDIBLE].

Those attitudes that you build up yourself over your lifetime, you live by them.

Well, I want to thank you very much for this [BOTH TALKING]

My pleasure.

Oh, my goodness, it's 4:00 now.

I'd better get back and tell my wife I'm still alive. No, that's all right, [BOTH TALKING]

Well, the traffic. You're going back to [BOTH TALKING]

No, it won't be-- no, I'm not going to Petaluma. She's in the city. I have to meet her someplace [BOTH TALKING]

Oh, good, good, OK.

Mm hm. OK.

Thank you so much.

Thank you.

It was wonderful.