

And I'm the interviewer. I'm Peggy Coster. And Jacob Offen is also assisting. So why don't you start out by telling us where you were born.

OK. I was born in a small town in the Rhineland called Landau, German pronunciation. And it was a very small town. In 1938, the year I was born, we had about 15,000 inhabitants, I would say.

And I remember considering the town fairly large, because I guess children view things from their perspective. So it never occurred to me I was born in a small town until I moved to a big one.

And I suppose one of the things that stand out more than anything else is that we had a very nice family life, a very comfortable, warm, cozy, family-oriented life, where there was a lot of warmth and a lot of love and a lot of sense of protection.

And the earliest memories include a lot about my grandmother, who became a very important figure in my life and who's been the focus of a lot of my pain about the Holocaust, because she was killed in the Holocaust.

And because of my really early and deep love for her and association with her as somewhat of a saintly figure, someone whom I wanted to emulate and who meant a very special human being to me, I have focused, I believe, most of my thoughts about the Holocaust on her.

And even now that I'm so much older, I haven't quite given up my grieving, and I'm torn between the remembering of it as being part of my redemption and the giving up of the grieving as part of my growth because I believe until I can somewhat disassociate myself from all the pain, I'm going to be stuck in a certain behavioral pattern that I don't really enjoy carrying on to the rest of my days.

How do you mean part of your salvation?

Well, I think in redemption, you have to go through some sort of a process if you want to redeem yourself. And I think remembering, to me, and never forgetting what happened was part of that process. And so I've chosen to live with this as part of my everyday life. I've never forgotten what happened to my grandmother, she being a symbol for everything else that happened.

And I've always felt that my mother, who, of course, fortunately lived to be 89 years old right here in America-- my mother sort of instilled in me this feeling that I should never forget and not just not forget like you forget something, but not forget ever, ever, ever, in all your dealings in life, including attitudes about the Germans today, who, after all, are-- many, many years passed since that happened and a whole new generation.

But I have difficulty because of this remembrance to not think about this current German generation with that big cloud hanging over my emotions and my mind.

But anyway, to go back to the little girl in Landau-- when I was 11 years old-- that was 1934-- my sister died. And she was three years older than I was. She was the middle child, and I had an older brother.

He left home to go to school in France when I was 10, so my sister and I already had been alone for about a year in the family. He left Germany because he could no longer attend his German school, which was called in German, gymnasium, which is not gymnasium, but the name of a high school.

And he was the best student in German. And one day when the teacher asked all the children-- and he was 16 at the time-- who got such and such a paper, because it was the only A in class, he raised his hand.

And the teacher was totally taken aback and said, you got an A? And he said, I guess so. This is my paper you're holding up. And he said, well, even though you are a guest here, we do want to make you feel that you are quite permitted to be comfortable, and-- as long as you remember that you are a guest here in Germany.

And this story was told to me. Of course, I don't remember anything about this. But he went home, and he said to my dad, I'm not going back to that school. You've got to get me out of here. And he was politically quite aware with his 16 years. And he had seen things happen, even before Hitler came to power.

And he sort of sensed already when he was, like, 12 and 13 and 14 that things were going on in Germany that we're not going to end up very well. Anyway, make a long story short, he went to France to go to school, to Strasbourg, which was only about an hour and a half from where we lived. We were very close to Alsace-Lorraine, this part of Germany.

And so he left. And my sister and I were home alone. And of course, my parents were already grieving about him not being there. And then she became ill with the same illness that I used to get every year, namely a middle-ear infection.

And this middle-ear infection was a very common thing with me. I just after two or three weeks, got up and ran around, and it was fine. She had never had anything like that. So theoretically, she had no immunity. She had no antibodies.

And she became ill with a mastoid that then went into the brain. And she had meningitis. And all I knew was that one day she was in Heidelberg in a clinic. And what do you know when you're 10 and 1/2. You don't know too much.

And we visited her in Heidelberg, my family and I. And there she was, lying in bed with her head all bandaged up and looking at me with a look that I can still see, which was one of great question. Her eyes were sort of questioning.

And since then, I've often thought, what was she thinking? Was she thinking, why aren't you helping me? Or I'm in terrible pain. Why am I here? But I still remember her very vividly being there, lying on that pillow with her head all bandaged up.

That was the last time I saw her. And then I was told she was dead. And I remember not feeling anything. I just remember feeling terrible that I didn't feel anything. And everyone around me was very depressed.

And my father put his head down at the dinner table and cried, which I thought was impossible to happen. And my mother, who was more open and emotional as part of my experience, seemed more natural in that state, but my father certainly didn't.

And I remember not going to the funeral, not being permitted to go to the funeral. And then I remember in school being sort of looked at strangely. And I felt strange. And no one really talked to me about it. It was just sort of a hush-hush kind of terrible thing.

And I was alone in the house. And my brother was in France. And my sister was gone. And suddenly, I was the only source of joy to my family. And I was talking to Jacob before about this, that I suddenly realized that it was totally up to me to make my parents happy. And if I didn't, then they were going to die of grief, and then it was going to be all my fault.

And maybe it was already my fault that my sister died. So I had a lot of guilt and a lot of confusion about everything that went on. Like I never knew how much of my parents' pain had to do with the Nazis, had to do with my father's inability to continue his wine business, which he'd had all this generation.

I didn't know how much had to do with my sister dying, my brother being gone. I just sort of managed to keep smiling and keep everybody amused. And it didn't seem that hard for me to do that. I don't remember having a great deal of difficulty.

I was just conscious of what my role was. And I don't know. John, this is a picture of my sister who was age 14 and 1/2 when this picture was taken.

And what year was it she died in?

'34. OK?

OK.

And she had been sort of a star in sports. She was a good ice skater. And she was a good swimmer. And she was fairly courageous. And I was sort of a little more namby-pamby. I didn't like ice skating because I didn't like to fall. And I didn't like swimming because I was afraid of the water.

And so she was sort of more of a hero. And I was a little bit more of a fearful child. And I always felt there was sort of some pressure on me to either get to be more like that or to do something different, something else that would help me become outstanding in some way, because I came from a fairly ambitious set of parents who wanted the children to do well and exceed in whatever they did.

And I remember distinctly being compared in school with, Ruth, my sister, and one teacher saying to me, you shouldn't just rely on your parents' good feelings towards you to get by in school. Now that your sister has died, they only have you. And she was such an outstanding student. So why don't you try to sort of follow in her footsteps?

I remember that. And I just realized I could never follow in her footsteps because she was so great, and I wasn't. I carried that with me.

On the other extreme, my brother was a very intellectually developed young person, as I already mentioned, and had a great deal of ambition intellectually, so he always got all A's. And I think I sort of probably snuck by with B's and C's, although I didn't hate school. But it wasn't very important to me. I wanted to play and have fun and dream about other things.

This is more or less the family scene. As far as the Nazis are concerned, I have some very early memories that are very vivid in my mind. And one of them is one that I also haven't made peace with. And it's about a girlfriend whose name was Hillock Knaebel, whose father owned a little small electric shop in town.

And her father's store was opposite my piano teacher. And so every opportunity we had after my piano classes and after school we would play. And that was when I was maybe nine and 10 and going into 11.

And she and I had the most wonderful relationship. I had just a perfect playmate there. She was very imaginative. She also was sort of a dreamy child and carried on with me on these imaginative things that we accomplished together. And sometimes she played at my house, and sometimes I played at her house.

She had very sort of dark, olive skin and dark eyes and dark hair. I was very light blonde as a kid, very blue-eyed. I don't think my nose had turned into the Semitic shape it has today. It was fairly obvious that I looked more German than she did.

And the memory that I have in my mind that focused on sort of the first time I experienced personally antisemitism was when we walked home from school one day towards her house. And at one point, she said to me, why don't you keep going? I have to stay here right now, and then I'll catch up with you.

And I sort of looked at her like, is she crazy or something? And I remember standing there. And then when she caught up with me, I said, what is this all about? And she said, well, you see, you're Jewish, and my father told me that I can't be seen with you because then people will boycott his store because I'm not permitted to have any Jewish friends.

And I cannot describe to you how I felt, except that I've never forgotten it. And it was like probably a combination of amazement, totally unbelieving, totally crushed. It was nothing physical. But it was just a mental blow that I've never been able to forgive her.

So we stopped playing together after that because I didn't want to do it behind anybody's back. Part of me felt, why should I do that? So our friendship ended. And shortly thereafter-- I think there were only one or two other young

Jewish girls in this school, which was a private girls' school.

And when one of those girls was sick or out of town or something, I didn't have anybody to play with during break. Here I am like 11, 12, 13. And I went to that school til I was 15. And I think it was psychologically very damaging to me because I pretended a lot of things that weren't true.

Number one, I pretended that I didn't care, which wasn't true. I did care. I felt terrible. I mean, that's an age where you conform, and you want to be like everybody else. And I even remember having distinct feelings of envy that I couldn't wear the Nazi uniform and that I sort of longed to wear this brown jacket that would make me feel like I was part of the club.

And then the other part hated that feeling because, obviously, being Jewish I was insane to want to wear a brown jacket, right? A lot of conflict there.

And then there was a small beginning of a Jewish Israeli young organization that promoted young people immigrating to Israel, and they started having a uniform. And it was the navy blue version of the brown Nazi jacket. And I just loved that jacket to death. I mean, that jacket was my entry into some sort of a group that wasn't my family.

What was the name of the group?

I've forgotten.

Was it Hashomer Hatzair?

Something like that probably. It was a youth group. And it was organized around interesting young children in Zionism. Thanks for reminding me. I didn't remember the name.

So the only other really personal physical experience I had was when some boys threw some rocks at me and said, you dirty Jew, get out of here, or something like that. And that was also when I was about 12.

And I don't remember that being nearly as painful as when my best friends didn't want to be seen with me. The other seemed sort of just like a stupid bunch of boys. I could sort of forgive them because I knew how dumb they were. But I knew she wasn't dumb. And I knew she was very close to me. Very different experience.

The other, of course, more obvious things that had to do with antisemitism was my father and mother's dinner conversation, which was constantly focused around Hitler, the threat to the business, the feeling of insecurity that we had towards the employees my dad had.

To backtrack a little bit, part of the wonderful parts of my childhood was a very vivid and colorful kind of image of these grapes coming in with horse-drawn carriages into this place that was a winery, which was maybe only 100 yards in back of the house.

And there was a press. And as children, we saw the grape juice coming out of the press, I mean, very sort of luscious and sensuous kind of images that I grew up with. And standing in the big barrels that were in the back yard and playing hide and seek around the cellar and being able to taste some of the wine when it just began to turn, which was when it first became alcoholic, and you could have just this much of it because if you had too much, you could get real tipsy on it.

And all these things were very aesthetically pleasing and maybe some of the reasons why I developed a strong interest in art and in color and all those things. I mean, who knows?

I think my father's concern about his employees being loyal had to do with the fact that they also were encouraged to join the party, but you couldn't work for a Jew as long as-- if you had joined the party. So they did not join the party, but there was always this fear, this uncertainty.

And my mother always promoted immigration. She talked about it all the time because my dad had three brothers in Buffalo that had immigrated the turn of the century, when there was another wave of immigration because of economic reasons in Germany.

And my father said, no, I can't go. He was in business with his brother. He was very loyal to this older brother. He also felt that he couldn't make the step from being independent and middle-class to going somewhere where he had to be obviously asking for help.

He was a very proud man. So even though he was extremely intelligent and knew exactly what was going on and saw the handwriting on the wall, he didn't want to see it. He was one of these people who thought, well, something is going to happen. Hitler is not going to last. You've heard this many times.

There will be some kind of interference from England or America or France. Or they'll take care of this guy. And of course, nothing happened. So there was this sort of combination of gloom and doom about my sister dying, my brother being gone, and the fear of what we should do as a family.

And I tried to not say that I wanted to leave, which part of it was unconscious. I did want to leave. I hated being in school. I didn't really feel comfortable in the town. When I was a small child, I loved going to synagogue with my dad. He was one of the trustees or something.

And I remember the distinct feeling of having my hand in his hand as we walked to temple and how comforting that was and how complete I felt and how proud I was to be walking alongside of him, this little girl sort of jumping along. And singing in the choir when I got to be a teenager.

And my father just made me feel that I was needed there. There was this subtle kind of pressure not to talk about leaving. My brother emigrated from France to America in 1937. He then started writing my parents almost immediately, saying you've got to get Sue out. You have to get Sue out. And we didn't.

Some time after Chamberlain went to Munich and had this disastrous meeting with Hitler, we started getting telegrams from our brother saying if you don't get Sue out now, she'll never make it. So sometime in, I guess, June or July of '38, I did go to Strasbourg to the American consulate, and I was given a number, quota number.

And my number was supposed to come up in two, three months. And all this sort of seems like a dream now. And then when the number did come up, my family said, yes, you have to go. And I said, but I can't go. What's going to happen to you? I can't leave you here.

And there was this terrible cross current of guilt and emotion and fear and at the same time anticipation and joy and looking forward to being away from this very serious environment and maybe being able to be carefree again.

I remember thinking when I was about 15, which was just shortly before I emigrated, that I didn't really truly ever feel the way I pretended to feel. And I remember sort of thinking, God, it must really be nice to be just sort of totally able to express what you feel.

And I thought, well, maybe I'll be able to do that when I go to America. I remember sort of having this kind of insight.

And in 1938 then, in September, I said goodbye to my dad and my mom. And at that time, my father was in bed. And he seemed to have quite a few stomach pains over the last couple years that I was home. But I never took it very seriously because they always went away.

And I never thought anything of it. And I didn't even know what the word cancer meant. In some ways, maybe I was sort of sheltered. I had no idea he was ill, seriously, but he was in bed when I left. And I said goodbye to him.

And it seemed that we were both trying to cheer each other up, so we didn't really cry. We sort of were joking a little bit.

And he was saying no, no, don't be a flirt. You know how you always flirt with the boys. Don't do that. You'll-- just get you into trouble. I remember him saying that.

And an aunt took me to Holland, where I waited for three weeks for the boat Rotterdam to leave, so I guess my brother really put a lot of pressure on my parents to get me out, even though I could have stayed another three weeks in Germany.

Well, lo and behold, I left October 8, and November 10 was Crystal Night. So I actually just really did get out in the nick of time, in terms of the accelerating series of events that happened.

And my father apparently became gravely ill just shortly after I left. So it went from just periodic stomach aches to severe pain. He was then diagnosed with x-rays to have some cancer in his intestines.

I knew nothing of this. Nothing was written at the time, except that my mother said after the 10th of-- no, no, wait a minute. Before the 10th of November, he was hospitalized in Frankfurt in a Jewish hospital. And my mom was telling me that after the operation-- which he must have been operated sometime maybe the 7th or 8th of November.

And then after the Crystal Night, the halls of the hospital were filled with people who were lying there because they didn't have enough beds. And that her sense of it was that my dad didn't get enough attention, medical attention, to help him survive the operation. That was her feeling.

I have no idea what the truth actually was. I assume he just had a bad cancer and he didn't survive. So at that time, I only remember in Buffalo, where I went to high school the first two years I was in America, at that time--

How old were you?

When my dad died I was 16.

And he died in November?

He died November 28. So I guess he lived, like, 18 days after that.

I only heard from my mother afterwards how horrible the scene was. She, of course, was all alone. She did have my father's brother, whom my father had been in business with all these years. But people had fled Landau shortly after the Crystal Night, where apparently people just came into our house and just ripped everything out of cupboards and threw it down.

And it was called Crystal Night because people smashed things. And the only good thing was that apparently the two employees that I had mentioned before that my dad had in the winery that he was concerned with were a good influence on the people. And there was no fire set or anything to the house. And according to my mom, it was because of them.

But the synagogue was burned down. And my mother never went back to Landau after that. She stayed in Frankfurt. And then all her energies were finally put into trying to get to the United States. And it was really a miracle, I think, that she got here because she didn't leave Germany until May of 1939.

And she was on the St. Louis, which is the boat that went to Cuba and wasn't permitted to land. So she was on that boat. And they made a movie of it called The Voyage of the Damned. And when she was in Cuba, my brother kept wiring to the Joint Distribution Committee, I believe, who had someone that was in touch with all the people that were on that boat.

And he somehow got across to her that when they went back to Europe-- because America wouldn't take them, and nobody would take them-- that she should not go to either France or Holland, even though her mother and father were in Holland at the time. And that's where she wanted to be.

He said, you must go to England, because he was so bright he knew that Hitler was going to overrun the lowlands. And I didn't know anything about this. I mean, I was in another space altogether. But he was very much in charge.

And due to his insistence, she did go to England. And that's how she survived and finally was living through the early years of-- the early months of the blitz and was settled somewhere in the country in Abbots Langley outside of the London area and came here in December of '39 on a boat that ran the blockade.

So at least I had one parent. And happily, she was here until 1981.

What happened to your grandparents?

Well, my grandmother and grandfather moved to Holland, I believe the end of '38 or early '39-- I'm not sure-- because one of their daughters, my mom's sister, had settled in Holland shortly after Hitler took power in '33. They were there for a long, long time. And that was the family I stayed with before I went on the boat.

They were in a little town called Arnhem. And my grandparents felt that at least they were with one of their children. And they felt safe, like people felt safe when they went to France too. Didn't they?

So when the Nazis came to Holland, I believe my aunt and uncle and their two children were hidden by righteous Gentiles, people who took it upon themselves to fight the system and give assistance to these Jews. And I think they were hidden in separate houses.

But there was no one that could really hide the grandparents. So I'm not 100% clear where my grandmother was, but I believe she was with another Jewish family somewhere in Holland, and so was my grandfather.

And then sometime in '39, my grandfather died, and my grandmother was deported. My aunt, the one that I stayed with, stayed in hiding all the way through till the end of the war and was liberated by the first Jewish Brigade of Israeli soldiers. And then they moved to Israel. That whole family moved to Israel.

I don't really know where my grandmother went. There was some talk that she might have been in Theresienstadt, but I don't really have any proof of that.

You were never able to find out?

Never able to find out. So my father's death was always to me a more natural death than one that had been specifically caused by the Nazis. My mother always experienced it as a combination of all his suffering, and he wouldn't have gotten sick if it hadn't been for all the pressures he was under.

I was always to take a little bit more of a-- I don't know what you would call it-- a different view of it. I thought he was probably meant to die of cancer. I couldn't quite believe that it was out of negligence that he died.

But the crucial fact was that I lost a parent at age 16, and he was irreplaceable to me because I was closer to him than I was to my mom. We were more alike. We just sort of took to each other. And I was the youngest and he sort of spoiled me when he had been fairly strict with the other two. So I have experienced that loss all my life.

And you've never-- it's never been resolved.

No, I think I still miss him. See, I do have to-- I seem to have this tendency to hang on to pain.

Well, it sounds to me like you've also-- you're quite well aware of the feelings that became conflicts in your life and that, it seems to me, a lot of people aren't aware of. So how did you become aware of what was going on psychologically?

I think that's easy. I think that because of the fact that I experienced some of these traumatic things very young, I think

that was an awakening of sorts that just sort of made me more conscious of what was going on the inside. I think so.

I think that maybe later on, I started reading more books and then maybe realized that what I was doing naturally was something that was maybe helpful in trying to come to terms with the experience.

Did you ever talk to people very much about it?

No. No.

At all?

Not until maybe the last 10 years of my life have I been willing to really talk more about it. And also I think not until the last 10 years have I been willing to sort of deal with my husband's illness. I feel that the whole subject of loss is something that has somewhat dominated my life experience.

And my husband became ill after we were married about seven years, and he got multiple sclerosis. He had it for 15 years. And I had three children when he was diagnosed. So my experience as a caregiver and as someone who was terminally ill-- even though MS is not like cancer, you do die eventually from other causes that are caused by MS, but necessarily you don't die from MS because it's a neurological disease that just becomes life-threatening in other ways.

I think that because of that experience, on top of all the others, I think maybe I began to realize that something had to happen inside for me to be able to digest it all and deal with it in a more open way.

What did you do to start making that happen?

Well, I think for one, maybe I started talking about it a little bit more. I formed another relationship with another man who was very open and warm and loving and supportive. And that began to sort of maybe release some of that pent-up lifestyle that I led.

My kids sort of accused me of coming home from work during the years that William was so sick and having a smile on my face. And then later on, they told me why did you smile, mom? We knew you felt terrible. You didn't have to smile. You could have told us how you felt.

But I didn't feel free to tell them how I felt. I felt it was important that I kept the stiff upper lip and the happy smile that I had done for my parents. It had become a *modus vivendi*. It was something that had supported me throughout all the years that I lived, so I wasn't going to give it up.

And then slowly, I think it became more apparent to me that honesty maybe was better than hiding.

How did you react to your children when they-- sounded like they wanted you to talk, be more open about your feelings.

I think it's always been hard for me to really open up to them completely, although it's getting much better.

So did you just, at the time, say you couldn't do it or--

No, I remember saying that it was very important to me to keep the family intact as a quote, unquote healthy family. And my coming home and having a long face wasn't going to make anybody feel any better, certainly not the children.

And so I thought I had done the right thing because the alternative was that we were all miserable. And I was determined to keep William at home. I did not want to put him in a rest home. And so we had to learn to work around the situation.

And I think if I had to do it all over again, I may not have been as tight-lipped about it. But I think I still would have tried to have been as normal, quote, unquote, as possible and not have this kind of a gloomy atmosphere. That didn't

seem right to me. However, I think I would have been maybe more open with them as they got a little bit older than I was.

So anyway, the rest of the family-- my mother was one of eight, also experienced some tragedies in the Holocaust. One sister of my mom's was deported. Another one was on the boat with her that went to Cuba. And she's now in America and still alive.

She got to England, too?

Trying to remember. No. I believe she actually got off the boat in Cuba, which is really strange. And I may have my history a little bit wrong there, but I know that she spent some time in Cuba.

Well, does this mean that-- because the way I always heard the story was the boat went all around the world, and nobody would let anybody in.

No, it didn't go around the world. It was anchored outside the harbor in Cuba. And there were wires flying to Roosevelt and to all the heads of state and the Pope. And they all said, here's a few hundred people. What sweat is it off your back to take those guys in? If we sent them back to Germany, they're certainly not going to live.

But nobody could get it past their legislature. Nobody could really get their act together. So then they divided the people among France, Holland, and England. And I don't know whether a follow-up study was ever made that traced the people that went to France and to Holland. But I know the ones that came to England were safe.

OK. Thanks.

They didn't go all around the world. But I guess they went back and forth.

Yeah, I think that this whole issue of surviving is one that involves a lot of guilt. It's difficult to justify your surviving if you're just an ordinary person who hasn't done anything very extraordinary. Why are you alive? Maybe somebody else could have made a huge contribution.

So are those the kind of things you've always thought about yourself?

Yeah.

Yeah.

It's always been a catalyst.

In terms of it, I'm really curious. You mentioned that your grandmother was such a saintly figure for you and that your mother encouraged you to always remember. What would it be like for you to not remember your grandmother so strongly? What would happen if you were to just live your life and not have to remember her so intensely?

I've thought about letting go of parts of my remembering and just remembering the good things. I've thought if I can just remember her as the wonderful grandmother who baked cookies for us all the time and visited us and who was always so great but not remember her end. I think that would be better for me, at least for my growth.

But it sounds like what you're saying is that the remembering involves suffering for you.

I don't think it necessarily needs to involve suffering if I can start separating those two aspects of my grandmother. And I think that's what I'm working on now is to not associate only the pain but just associate all the beauty that she represents to me.

I don't want to forget about her. It's very important to me that I remain faithful to her memory. She was an extraordinary

woman in many, many ways.

I'm sorry. When you say you're working on it now, what do you mean? How are you doing that?

Well, I'm working in a group in Tiburon called the Center for Attitudinal Healing. And it was started by a man named Jerry Jampolsky, who based his work on a series of books called the Book of Miracles. And it's simply--

Is that the Course in Miracles?

Mm-hmm. It's simply an expression of conquering fear through love. And you can state that a thousand different ways. But they define health as inner peace and healing as letting go of fear. So my work with them at the moment is in a support group with caregivers for people who have life-threatening illnesses.

Half of them are AIDS. Many of them are cancer patients. And because of my experience with William, I feel I have a lot of empathy with people who are caregivers because caregivers have their own special problems that they need to work with in order to be able to continue to be caregivers.

And when I was one, I didn't have any support at all. I didn't even know what a support group was. And I don't know of any existed at that time.

Now, I'm thinking that Wally is your second husband and William died. How long ago did he die?

In '74.

And I'm sorry. I forgot what I had in mind.

It's all right. So I think this--

Would--

Go ahead.

Would the-- we're talking about-- you've mentioned this a couple of times-- and I do agree with you-- that just talking about it is really the most healing aspect of it, that for the first time in being able to openly admit to what you felt and think about out loud what you felt that that is very healing and maybe facilitating of your letting go too. Is that true?

I think it's true. I think being in a supportive environment, which I am in the center, is very important. Talking by itself I don't think is very healing if you are with someone who isn't very receptive. But being in a group of people that encourage you and empathize, that's sort of a healing thing.

Is your--

Go ahead.

Is your doing this interview part of the healing too?

I hope.

Kind of came up suddenly, but is it part of the healing too?

Maybe.

You said you started talking about 10 years ago. What catalyst did that?

I think I'm very conscious of getting older. And I realize there's a limited amount of time during which I can grow. And it suddenly became more pressing that something happened in my development. I don't want to die the same person I am today. I hope I can make some progress.

And I realized that the progress involved opening up and not continuing to be sort of closed and more of a pretending kind of a person in my relationships. It's still difficult for me to be really, totally open. Maybe it always will be. I don't know.

People always-- I'm changing the subject right now. People talk a lot about the lessons from the Holocaust. And what are the lessons that you would give?

I don't think there are any lessons. I think life itself is a lesson. And it's just part of life. I see no lesson in pain. I don't think anything good comes out of pain.

I've often jokingly said that I thank Hitler because I really love being in America, and he permitted me to be in America. But at what expense? Look at all that pain and suffering. If there's any lesson, it's that we can't let evil be without trying to get a hold of it and fight it.

How would you-- thinking about fighting it because, like, a lot of times, there's two phrases I hear a lot. One is it could happen again.

And the other is that it was caused by the German economy and the armistice. And both of those are too big. I mean, there's nothing doable in either of those sentences. So if another Holocaust could be prevented, how would people go about doing that?

By confronting every person that makes an antisemitic remark. Not letting anti-Negro, anti-anything go by without making a comment on it, by making sure that you raise your children in a way where they realize all human beings are alike.

It's such a fundamental approach, that it has nothing to do with the German economy or with-- is the next recession going to do this or that? It has to do with people's basic human attitudes. And I feel not terribly hopeful at this point because I think we've done unbelievable in technology, but I believe human nature hasn't progressed very much.

We have these basic feelings of fear and mistrust and all the things that come out of fear, which are sometimes hatred or certainly violent dislike that make people do things that aren't rational. So part of the attitudinal healing attraction to me is that it really tries to sort of make people respond in a more human, appropriate way.

One of the things I've been reading about is they're beginning to put books out now about children of the perpetrators, children of the SS, the top Nazis, people like that. And a lot of times they've actually suffered very much at the hands of the parents.

But one of the questions it raises is-- it also rises in my mind in conjunction with some work that's being done by some therapists, including Alice Miller, who's put out a book called *For Your Own Good*. It's about child abuse, abusive child-raising practices.

And it analyzes Hitler in depth in that book, but it also puts out the idea that child abuse was a major cause of the Holocaust. And so my question-- getting kind of long-- but it's how would you put this together? Is it possible to avoid having another Holocaust without somehow dealing with the perpetrators and the children of the perpetrators? And also-- we'll leave that one by itself.

Well, it's a very big question you're asking, because it involves a tremendous amount of things. Certainly it seems to be proven that whoever has suffered pain does not become better for it but tends to evolve out of the pain by passing it on to somebody else.

It seems that that is the case with abused children, that the opposite occurs from what we think, namely, they would grow up and say I'll never do this. But without their almost being able to control it, they'll do it again.

So I don't know how accurate this really is. These are all things that we hear and read. And sometimes it seems to be true that there is something in us that has to come to terms with our pain by inflicting it on somebody else.

I don't have much patience, really, with that kind of an approach. And I'll tell you why. Because it's not going to get us anywhere. I think that the approach that I'd like to take is not so much what do we do about child abuse, but how can we get enough individuals conscious as to their actions and take responsibility for their actions on a very simple level? How can we? It seems almost an insurmountable task.

Have you thought much about that, because I-- this is the level I usually go to, because I don't think the economy caused the Holocaust. I think how people responded to it caused the Holocaust. And so have you thought much on this level of what can you do-- in terms of lessons of the Holocaust, how could you go about assisting people in seeing their actions count?

Have you thought about how to eliminate antisemitism? I'll answer it. I'll ask you that question.

Yeah.

How would you go about eliminating antisemitism?

Is this OK, John?

Sure. Sure.

Because we're trying to get your interview. That's why I ask.

No, I think it's important that I know where your question comes from.

OK. I have to get [INAUDIBLE]. I think-- my personal experience is that a lot of intellectual opinions don't do a lot of good most of the time because they're very often based on false premises. And I think what would do the best good is for people to really talk on the kind of level we're talking today.

Because I know that my attitudes have changed. I mean, I don't mean I was antisemitic before I started doing the interviews, but I'm much more aware of the kinds of experience and the depth of the experiences of what people have gone through during the Holocaust.

And I think that it's-- I can't really articulate at this point what the change is, but I know there's been a change. And that's been my experience my whole life is that if I talk to people on a deep level about emotional things that it creates bridges and bonds.

And then once those bridges are created, you can, in the face of real evil, I think, still deny those friends, because if you're facing your own annihilation, if you don't-- I can see where people would succumb and do that.

But I think talking like I have has made me more aware that I really hope I would not do that. And I hope you don't find it offensive that I can't say I never would, but I just human nature. You can never say never.

On the contrary, I totally empathize with you because I've asked myself that question many times, and I've expressed it to John and to Lonnie and to whoever wants to listen that the real question is, how many Jews really would have stood up if the tables had been turned and another part of the German population would have been persecuted and sent to the gas chambers.

We all have to ask ourselves, how deep is our courage? And how far would we have sacrificed our families and our

lives for the sake of another human being? So you're not alone in that at all in asking that question. I think it's a very important question and one that I've been thinking about for many, many years.

But in response to your original question, what lesson are there from the Holocaust, I think we do not have control over how parents raise their children. You and I are just sitting here. All we can do is affect the very close circle that is our life.

If we can do our own small part in trying to impart to those people that are close to us whose lives we touch the importance of honesty and the importance of love rather than fear, of caring rather than pushing down, helping people to rise up out of their problems rather than making their problems worse by exacerbating their pain, if we can just do our own little thing, that's all we can do.

We can't change the world. Nobody can. I think that if I were-- I have not wanted to go and really resume any friendships with any of the people in Germany. You didn't ask me that, but I'll volunteer it. I went back in 1980 or something and wanted to show Walter where I was born.

And I felt totally alienated, totally unable to bridge that huge gap. And I experienced it as a fairly negative experience. And I haven't wanted to go back since then. So obviously I wasn't able to rise above my pain and above my experience.

That made me realize that if I had met any one of the people that I went to school with, I would not have been a good force for them. I would have been full of bad feelings and negative attitudes. And they would not have gained anything from it.

Until I'm ready to forgive to some extent-- can I use that word-- I would not want to make any contact with any of them. And I've been invited to go back to certain groups that have formed that are quite positive and doing political things and having lectures and so on. I just can't do it. I know that my vibes wouldn't be good.

Yeah.

So yes, I think--

Well, getting back to the children of the abusers-- and actually, that's anybody who participated, not just the top people, and what's going on in Germany today, how does all this new political developments and talk of reunification-- how do you feel about that?

I'm very torn about it. I'm very torn about it. Part of me would like to believe that the new generation of Germans should not be held responsible for what their fathers did. Like the sins of the fathers should not be passed on to the sins of the children. Part of me wants to.

This is the struggle inside of me that I'm describing to you that is going on now. I want to let go of a lot of that negative feeling and pain. And I do want to be able to look forward rather than backward. I find it difficult.

I do have apprehensions about a very strong economic and political Germany. On the other hand, another side of me says it's better to have a strong and economically healthy Germany because then they won't have to repeat the past, which was acting out of frustration and feeling suppressed and feeling that they don't have enough power. So I don't know.

So what happens when you think about the fact that they elected 11 neo-Nazi people to their--

I feel very threatened by that. And I also feel threatened by the whole concept of the political right, whether it be in this country or any other country. I feel there's a certain fear that I have that obviously comes from experience, that sometimes a very small group of extreme people can bring out the worst in a lot of big groups of people.

But the inverse can also happen. Sometimes a small group of good people can influence people out of their proportion

also.

OK.

See, there's potential in human beings for good and evil. And you know that from the Catholic religion. And I know it from the Jewish religion. I think that that potential exists from the day we're born. And history evolves on the basis of-- during which time good or evil had the upper hand.

Yeah.

It's interesting that you talked about what are the causes of antisemitism. And to me, one of the causes of antisemitism is envy, is that people, in their own living of their lives have such despair and such hardship that they need to pick a target, that they feel envious towards and blame them for their poor existence.

And I think in many ways, that's what happened in Germany. And one of the lessons that often comes out of a terrible situation like this is that, to be great and to aspire to greatness is wrong, is bad.

And it sounds like you've really lived, to me, what the most important lesson of a Holocaust is, is never let anybody's power over you diminish your own aspirations toward greatness, that you've really allowed yourself to live your life in as full and successful manner as possible and not let anybody's envy stop that. Is that true for you? Do you feel that that's true?

Not consciously. I wasn't doing it because I thought that was a precept.

I think that the state of Israel is sort of like that. It's an intense aspiration toward greatness and to never let the envy that others have felt for them stop them from achieving. Or Jews in this country too.

I could make a sad commentary on what I think right now is not a show of greatness on the part of the Israelis. I think they're working hard at diminishing whatever grievance people felt for them in 1967, '70, et cetera.

You mean by the way they treating the Arabs?

Yes, by the way they're handling their own internal situation, not being able to come to a consensus. It's a very difficult time for me in terms of my relationship to Israel. I have a lot of mixed feelings.

Do you think that could have some-- that could partially be the result of the fact that so many of the Jewish people who settled there were Holocaust survivors and possibly have never really dealt with the resultant emotions?

That could be partially true, certainly a lot of fear. I've talked to a lot of Israelis, and I have some very dear Israeli friends. And a lot of them say that they had very good relationships with the Arabs, especially the children of people who settled there.

It's very complicated. I don't think I could really do it justice right now in going into it in detail.

This interview has actually taken off in a way they usually don't. So if you don't want to keep talking like this, we don't have to.

I don't mind.

I would like know-- getting back to some of the more factual stuff-- what were the wonderful qualities that your grandmother had?

Oh, OK.

You mentioned them, but you've never talked about it.

OK. She is sort of the symbol to me of kindness. And her presence in a room without her ever taking sides in arguments, in family arguments, always seemed to be a very steady one that I sort of sensed as a child. She would never take sides. She would just be there.

And somehow felt better because she was that way. She was very generous. Her love, like many women's love, was expressed in the form-- she cooked and baked and took care of her family. That was her expression.

And she loved all those eight children and made them feel secure, I think, and loved. She had a certain persona that was just very different from anybody I've ever known, different from my mother.

She was totally non-judgmental, which I've always envied, because I did have a fairly judgmental family that was not being able to step back and let things be. There was usually something said about this and that.

I liked her warmth. I spent quite a few childhood vacations there. They had a little farm in a tiny village near the little town where I was born. And I loved being there. There was a great atmosphere of sort of natural, kind of healthy comforting environment.

I remember how I felt when she stood in front of the door when I opened the door. And there she was with her two shopping bags. One was with cookies, and one was with cake. And I always thought, well, this is heaven. Here's my grandmother with all the goodies.

I remember her sitting in bed when I was a child when she slept overnight, which she sometimes did. It was like a half-hour train ride away from where we were. And I have this very vivid picture of this woman sitting in bed in a white nightgown with eyelet embroidery and sort of pretty ruffles on the sleeve.

And her hair, which was usually braided and pinned up in back in a bun was let down. And because it was braided, it was in all these little curls. And she would sit there in bed and brush her hair. And I thought she was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. She's just a beautiful person.

Do you have a picture of her?

Not right here, interestingly enough. It's right here.

What kinds of activities did you share with her? What things did she like to do?

Well, I remember her giving me a bath. And they didn't have a bathroom. They had an outhouse. Until I got to be about 12 or 13, they had an outhouse.

And so there was water heated on the stove. And there was a big tub on the floor. And she filled it with water, and she stuck me in the tub and scrubbed me down. And I thought it was wonderful. She would dry me off.

And we would go and play in the hayloft. And they had a couple of cows and chickens running around the yard. I mean, it just was really-- it seemed like a really nice life to me, a real nice environment.

And her house was always full of something. Cousins were there or an aunt or an uncle. My mother's brothers and sisters were visiting and spoiling me, fussing over me. I probably loved that too.

Did she ever encourage you in the direction of the arts or the areas that you wound up in?

No. However, I think I did get a sense of being valuable because she loved me and she let me know how she felt. And I guess that made me feel a certain sense of self-worth. I think all those things are very reinforcing. But I wasn't conscious of it at the time.

Was she around when your sister died? And what kind of a support was she?

Nobody talked to me about it.

Including her?

Mm-hmm. I think in those days, people thought children shouldn't talk about death. I've just recently started talking about my sister's death.

When you see movies about the Holocaust and stuff, how do they strike you? Do they strike you as being [? facts? ?]

Well, I think I've seen mostly documentaries. I don't think I ever saw a feature film about the Holocaust. But I've seen Shoah, and I remember Shoah the most.

Part of me just doesn't want to believe it. Part of me just sort of stands outside that experience and says it couldn't have happened. It's too inhuman. It couldn't have happened.

How could anybody do such a thing? How could anybody starve people to death and then gas them or-- I see these pictures, and I know I went to the Yad Vashem in Israel, and I just couldn't believe it. And part of me still doesn't want to believe it. There's a certain amount of denial is still going on.

You mean with you or in society?

With me.

Yeah.

I can't possibly accept it.

When did you first hear about it? It must have been during the war sometime.

I don't remember when I really first heard about the specifics of it. It must have been when everybody else heard about it, when it became-- when the Americans came in and liberated these camps. I think there was a lot of disbelief. And I think part of me still has that. I mean, can you believe such a thing?

Mm-hmm.

You can believe it. I find it difficult.

Are there any people you remember in particular-- how did your brother happen to be so far-sighted?

He's very intelligent. He's just a very, very politically astute young person. He read the newspaper when he was 10, when I was playing with dolls. At age 10, he was already reading the daily paper.

He was just one of these intellectual kids. He wasn't very sporty, and he didn't do a lot of daydreaming. I spent a lot of my time daydreaming and having a lot of fun riding my bicycle and things like that. He was very focused on politics very early.

He ended up being a labor economist and working for the UN in Geneva for 25 years. He's just politically very savvy.

Yeah. So is there anybody in particular that you remember, either good or bad, that just stands out in your mind, the people who stand out in your mind?

You mean, when I was a child or at any time in my life?

Any time.

Well, there are a lot of people who've had an influence on me. I've had several surrogate fathers, men that were a lot older than me who sort of became substitute father figures. A couple of them were European.

I think I've always been attracted to people who had this combination of strength and warmth, that weren't just coldly intellectual or weren't just purely emotional but were able to combine some of those two qualities. It's nice when you experience it.

It is.

I think I've been impressed with some of the people I've met in my working life, people who've shown me direction and how to think on other levels and who have broadened my ability to operate on different stratas in the business world as well as maybe in the arts.

Your husband strikes me as being a real interesting combination of the intellect and emotion. And do you feel that he's been helpful to you in putting some of these feelings about the Holocaust to rest and to come to terms with them? Do you feel he's been instrumental in that?

I don't feel they have come to rest. But maybe I'm dealing with them.

Coming to rest?

Yeah, maybe at least they are stirring instead of just sort of sitting there on top of me. Yes, I do believe he's been very helpful. He has. And if I were more willing, he would even be more helpful. But I've resisted him for a long time.

You mean-- how do you mean?

Well, he wanted me to sort of open up more and to be more open in general. That's why he took me to Germany. And I've just not been a very willing subject. And I agree with you, though, Jacob. I think he's had a very good influence on me.

Sometimes I think he isn't serious enough. [LAUGHS] I'm the heavy in the relationship. I'm very serious about everything.

How come you didn't want him to be here today?

It's not easy for me.

You mean to talk? You have talked to him about it, though?

I have never sat down and talked to him for two hours about it. I mean, he gets snatches, and my children get snatches, and my friends get snatches. But it's rare that you really sort of sit down and keep going.

Has this been real hard?

Yes. It's hard.

Do you want us to stop? We could.

I'm not in agony.

What is it that you're allowing us to see that you're afraid to let him see?

I don't think I've said anything that he doesn't know. It's just that we've never had long, long stretches of this kind of a conversation. Or I would talk sometimes about this and sometimes about that. I think the main issue really is this larger issue of forgiveness.

Is it possible to forgive? And is it only out of forgiveness that something positive can happen? And is the perpetuating of reaction-- the negative, to the negative, is that just perpetuating more pain?

What's the negative to the negative?

The negative is that I'm still full of bad feelings for the Germans. And is that going to just perpetuate more bad feelings by the Germans towards the Jews or towards their having been guilty? They certainly been made to feel guilty for a whole generation now or more.

You mean the Germans?

Yes.

OK.

And I think nothing ever comes out of guilt. Nothing good comes out of guilt, ever. You just hate people who make you feel guilty, don't you? So I don't think anything positive is coming--

Other than having a conscience.

Yeah. I think there must be a lot of German people who feel terrible about what happened, who do have a conscience. And those are the Germans that we hope will take the upper hand.

Well, see, one of the things I was thinking about when I was asking those questions was that right after the war and for years people really couldn't express Nazi philosophy openly. But they could to their children. They could pass it on. And so I was kind of exploring what you might think about that possibility.

I've never permitted myself to even think along those lines because if I would, I would just be very depressed. If I thought that a lot of these ex-Nazis passed all this hatred and disgust and this antisemitic kind of feeling on, then why are we here? Why don't we just go and kill ourselves? Be much easier than to wait for the next time around.

I mean, I just can't permit myself to dwell on that. Maybe it's stupid. Maybe I'm just sticking my head in the sand. But I do know that there's antisemitism all over the world. There are still people who think the Jews killed Christ. So if they're very religious then they have a perfect reason to be antisemitic, right?

Yeah, no, I understand what you're saying.

Yeah, I mean, let's face it. What about all the people who are anti-Black? They're just as bad, people who think that there are no good Blacks, and you just can't trust them. And there are a few that are educated, and a few that have made it, but most of them-- it's the same thing.

The human race is a very strange race. We seem to need to pull ourselves up by stepping on somebody else down. That's our way of rising. It's not good.

Yeah.

We got to do something about that. I hope I've raised my kids at least on that level to be decent human beings. And I believe I have. I believe that if I've accomplished that, then I have at least been a good parent.

Speaking of that, have you talked much about the Holocaust and your experiences and your feelings about it with your children?

No. Not a lot.

What's the reason for that?

Well, early on, I had a wonderful excuse. I didn't want to burden them, quote, unquote, even more because they already had the experience of their father as a big, negative experience in their lives. So I thought, well, that's enough.

And when we first got married, well, neither one of us ever wanted to marry a European. We both had determined when we were young that we would marry only an American, because we didn't want to relive all these experiences.

But of course, then the opposite happened. You're attracted to somebody who understands you or something. So then we decided we would just have the most American kids in the world. And we raised them by Dr. Spock, by the book, and a lot of freedom and not much discipline, and you name it.

We were as American as can be. So part of that was also not to give them this heavy-duty kind of feeling that their parents had suffered. And we were classic. I know that this is what goes on with most people who went through that period. We were no different.

Have you ever heard of that-- it's a syndrome they call children of Holocaust survivors.

What kind of a syndrome is that?

It's been-- therapeutically, it's been diagnosed as a psychological illness, I guess, that children of Holocaust survivors often experience.

And how does that express itself in them?

I don't know enough to say.

Well, let me tell you. It's done through feelings of fear of living your own life, of tremendous feelings of guilt about separating from the families, physically living too far away, making choices which would wound or hurt the parents, those kinds of things.

Protecting parents. And it happens very often when the parents never talked about it.

Well, we do talk about it now, although I usually wait till I get questions. I don't sit them down and say today we're going to talk about it. But I'm very open to answer questions now. I'm sort of waiting for them to ask me.

How do they know it's important to ask if you don't let them know it's important?

I've dropped hints in the last couple of years that I'm ready to talk about it now when I wasn't before.

What made you feel like you were ready to be interviewed now as opposed to a month ago?

Well, basically because John says he has two hours, and he wanted to fill them. I wasn't really any more ready. I just thought I was doing my duty. Here is this man giving his expertise, time, and nothing was happening.

How did you happen to get involved with the Holocaust Center?

Someone approached me about 10 years ago whether I would make a contribution. And I didn't even know that the

library existed. So then I went down there, and I got a little bit more involved in it and went to a couple of meetings.

And then Lonnie one day called me and asked me whether I wanted to be involved in the Oral History Project. And I said yes. I really haven't devoted a lot of time to it. But I'd like to.

[INAUDIBLE]

I'm afraid I haven't answered all your questions as well as you'd like me to, but--

No, no, you've answered fine.

I'm just trying to be honest, not give you anything that I don't feel.

No, you've answered fine. I have one more question. And what brought it up was when you said that forgiveness was the issue. Remember little while back you said that?

Mm-hmm.

And I was thinking that this must be a problem for you when you deal with Christians because a lot of survivors I've encountered, they don't feel like it's necessary for them to forgive. And yet, and the whole basis of Christianity, forgiveness is one of the biggest tenets. And so I would think that would create a lot of conflict when trying to talk to Christians.

I can honestly tell you that it makes absolutely no difference to me whether I'm talking to a Christian or a Jew when it comes to all those issues. It makes a difference to me as to what kind of a person it is because I have just as many problems with Jews as I do with Christians when they have certain aspects to their philosophies or to their expressions of feelings on prejudice or hatred or fear.

And I think there are just as many Jewish people who are prejudiced as there are Christian people. So what I have tried to do and particularly at my work where I've had more opportunity to meet a variety of people is to try to live as closely to what I believe in as I can so I can impart directly what my feelings are.

OK. Well, I don't have any more questions. Do you?

No, actually just a comment to tell you the truth, and it would be that I've talked to a lot of survivors and children. And you really strike me as having gone a lot deeper in your thinking about the effects of all of these experiences on your life to be able to articulate them so clearly. And that's very exciting. And I hope that you never stop it and that you continue.

Thank you. I hope so too. I'm just starting. Have a little ways to go.

Thanks a lot.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Great, great.

OK. Well, we never even showed you [INAUDIBLE]. Don't put it back on. But this is a ruin right near this little town of Landau where we used to hike on weekends.

Why don't I grab it as long as we're so close.

You want to, really?

Sure. I got it right now.

OK.

That's amazing. OK.

OK. And then this is a picture of my dad, who was a soldier fighting for the Germans in World War I. He was a very sensitive man who did not enjoy wearing a uniform.

OK.

But he did it. This is an old etching of the center square in the little town of Landau where they had a market every Wednesday and Friday that my mom took me to, where we bought vegetables and things.

And this is the Landau that you knew.

Yes.

This is how it looked.

Well, no. This is older than that. But it's exactly the same square. And when I was there, all those buildings are still there. OK, John?

OK. Sure.

And then the other thing is-- what I wanted to say was that a lot of the German Jews have lived in Germany for hundreds of years and felt, because of that, very German, maybe more German than Jewish, a lot of them. And these are my mother's grandparents.

And apparently, their family had already been there for several hundred years. So you're talking about an established Jewish community in that part of Germany.

This is your mother's grandparents.

This is my mother's grandmother and father.

OK.

OK. And that sort of explains why some of the German Jews had trouble leaving. They thought that they belonged there as much as the non-Jews did, but they found out otherwise.

I'd have a hard time if people told me I wasn't a real American.

Would you leave?

I would after hearing all these stories.

[LAUGHTER]

OK. OK, John.

OK, great. Thank you.

OK.