

Could you tell us how old you were during this period of time? And does it seem like an entirely different lifetime? I mean can you get philosophical about it?

I was 27 years old, and I was in Kobe during that period of time. Philosophical about it-- now, as years went by, and I'm getting to be an ancient old man, having read about it-- and having read a lot about the Holocaust, I feel good about the fact that I was in some way responsible, not responsible, but involved in helping people to save their lives.

And that makes me feel good. I tell this to my children and grandchildren. And that's it. That's all I can say. I'm glad I'm in America. I'm glad that my family is here. My children were able to go to good schools, universities. My grandchildren, great grandchildren are here. The only anything I have a great regret and sorrow that my wife left me, 10 years ago. She died of cancer. I'm grateful.

Did you-- in your early 20s, mid 20s, when you were like meeting with the rabbis and stuff--

Yes, from 20-- I was 25 to 27, that's the period of time.

Did you feel you had good judgment or did you feel honored? I mean, did you feel like you were very young?

I felt that I was very young, but I must tell you that the president of our community and other associates that I worked with, especially the president, was a very great, fine leader, dedicated man, and I was his secretary. And I was very glad that I was able to learn a lot of things from him, and help him in this great work that he did. I give all the credit to him and to my other friends. Unfortunately, they're not there anymore.

Were the refugees that you helped grateful? Have you heard from them?

Yes, I've heard from them. They would come and talk to me.

Answer in a complete sentence.

Even lately, when I meet some of them, ah, Mr. Hannon, you are the one that was in Kobe, Japan. I got letters from Australia and from America, and some of them I met in Israel. They were grateful. And they said, you helped us a lot, and we are very grateful. That's all. Nobody ever-- as a matter of fact, there was a time in 1950 or so, I had a very difficult time in Israel.

I lost my job and it was difficult. And I don't know how those refugees that were spread all over the world, America, Canada, Australia, they found out that I had a difficult time. I had a family of three children. I started getting care packages, 10, 15, 20 came from all over from these people. And I was very, very grateful to them. I didn't know who they were. There were no names from-- on the labels, but that's the way they paid me back.

Amazing.

It was good. It was good. I'm grateful.

What happened to the rest of your family in Russia?

I don't know.

You don't know.

I left when I was three years old. My parents took me out. They didn't correspond. They didn't contact each other. So I never knew where they were. My father never corresponded with them. I know that time took its own. That's all.

Do you have any final statements or feelings about why you were involved, or was it fate, was it the hand of God?

I always feel that, and I say to my friends and whoever asks me this question, that I'm glad I was in the right place at the right time to be able to take part in that work. I'm grateful for my associates in the JEWCOM, especially the president, Mr. Ponve, the ladies, the wives who were helping. Everybody works, works really hard to help these people who were really strangers. They were different people from ours. We were Russians. They were Polish, Jews, Orthodox, and so forth. And I'm grateful that I was able to do it.

OK. And anything that I didn't ask about that you feel we should know?

I just want to underline once again that there's one person that was very, very responsible, and to whom I owe this luck of being his secretary, Mr. Ponve, who passed away in 1969 in Los Angeles. He was the one who requested me to help him in his work. And he was the one-- he was, at that time already, not a very strong man. He was a sick man. But his work, his energy-- there was a lot of things that probably were not even told to us by the Japanese. He was very well-respected. And I want his name to be forever known, if it's possible.

OK. And one last technical question again. Where did the name JEWCOM come from?

Jewish Community of Kobe, Ashkenazi, in brackets. In the telegram office, for the purpose of sending telegrams, it was shortened, instead of Jewish Community, got a long, long, long description, JEWCOM, that's how its done. The Polish Jews couldn't pronounce JEWCOM. They called it YEFCOM, because for them, J was not a-- they didn't use the letter J in their language, in Yiddish or in Polish. So it was easier for them to talk to each other, JEWCOM, JEWCOM, YEFCOM, YEFCOM. It's a Jewish Community of Japan. It was too long. And that's how it started. And how it went on.

Great. Thank you. Now quiet for 30 seconds for the editor.

This is 30 seconds room tone, 30 seconds room tone.

Can I drink?

[SILENCE]

OK.

End room tone.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]