

Be sure to come here. So I-- and I had-- I think I had \$200 on those days saved up from \$35 a week. And I got to take a plane. Yeah. And I go to Los Angeles. And it was wintertime, you know. It was, I remember, the snow and slush and the snow around Pittsburgh in those days with that, from the mills. And a lot of homes were heated by coal, coal furnaces. Of course, it was black. Even it was blacker and dirtier like in my shtetl because there the snow was white and slushy. You get, you know, and I came to Los Angeles. And it was around 11 o'clock. And one of my uncles came to me.

When I came down the steps, I come in the airport, and the high ceilings and everything white, with tiles around the walls, and the floors are white tiles. And I go out, and the sun-- the sun is shining, and the weather is exactly-- here it was cold, and here it was exactly not too hot, not too cold. And I see the people are dressed up entirely, different than we. We, wintertime here, with the coats and the-- oh, I thought, my gosh, it looked to me so like paradise.

And my uncle met me. And he was 53 years old, a bachelor-- one of them. And he said, here, I'll take you over-- he has an apartment-- I'll take you over to Uncle Ralph. He has a big house, and you will stay with him. And he takes me over-- very nice. And they were very, very friendly, and very touched by-- and I was, at that time, young. And already I was dressed up nice.

So the first day, we had dinner together, these two brothers. And the older brother had a family, with his children. And as the day went by, they showed me a room where to sleep. And the next morning, this bachelor uncle came again, and he said, well, you want to go? And this uncle, with the other uncle where I stayed, were partners in business, in pipe business, the same. So he said, you want to go--

The same business your brother, Valera, was in.

Right. Right. And he says, you want to-- do you want me to drop you off at the business? The house were empty there. The kids left. Or do you want to go with me? I have to go downtown. I have to stop at the bank for about half an hour, and then we'll-- you know, do you want to be with me? I said, I'll be with you.

So he went, and he brought me to downtown Los Angeles. You know, they lived away from Los Angeles. And he said, here is the bank. You want to come in with me, or want to wait for me and look around? I said, let me look around. And I start walking the block. And I see how it is divided. You know, LA downtown is quite in circles. You have this and this. It doesn't go like in Pittsburgh. You know, it goes away this way and that way. Pittsburgh isn't laid out so-- Los Angeles.

And I look around, I make familiar. And he said, if you are not-- you be here after half an hour or so. So, I marked myself the way, I shouldn't get lost. It was squares and this. And I go-- and for fun, I run in the jewelry stores were. So I go in, and I ask-- I'm a refugee. I'm looking for a job. I had already done it the way I looked in Pittsburgh. And I have to make a living. I'm looking for a job.

So, man, he said, stay here. We take out [INAUDIBLE] and this and make us, before the time-- before the time, somebody says, you see, go over across the street. I think their watch repairman left them about a week ago, and they might need.

And I go in, and sure enough, they need a watch repairman. And-- and they asked me, how much do you want? And I knew in Los Angeles everything is-- I said \$60. And I was making \$35. And I wasn't-- I just did-- for sure I wanted to test how it was. And he said, well, you come Monday. It was, I think, during the weekend. And we'll see. and if you know your business, you'll get \$60.

Then I still went in another story, you know, another store. So the other store said they have a branch in Long Beach, and they can use a watchmaker their, Long Beach. I don't know. I said, how do you get there. He said, oh, you take the streetcar. You know your streetcar in Riga, I was-- there were streetcars. A streetcar was going maybe two or three miles at the most. And here what happened. And Long Beach is 30 miles from Los Angeles. And I got in, and I thought two or three miles, and I had still a lot of time. I didn't realize it. I got in in the street, and the streetcar goes, and goes,

and goes, and goes, and goes, and goes. And I see my time is running up, and I got so worried.

And I don't know how to-- what I should do. Should I-- anyhow, and I always-- and I start asking, is this too far? And they said pretty soon, pretty soon. Anyhow, I arrived in Long Beach. And while I was-- and it so happened, when the street car stopped, the jewelry store was maybe a-- it was-- they showed me where it is. You could see it.

And I went in. And they said, yeah, if you want to. And we'll-- and I asked, too, \$60. And they said, we'll pay you. And meanwhile, and I get back in the-- in this, on and on. And I thought, 30 miles, you know, takes you 30 or 35 minutes, that I'll be late so much. And I was so worried. And I came. And my uncle was-- no, my uncle was so excited, you could see.

Well, he said, what happened to you? And I tell them the story. I thought in a streetcar, five, 10 minutes the most. And here-- anyhow, when I tell them the story, I looked and I found jobs. And I like it so much here, maybe, maybe. And I have to-- in one place there. And I said, what is better, where to take it? He said, well, I don't know. He said, downtown you'll be closer to the relatives. There is--

So I decided that there is so much opportunity. So we were talking. Well, I'll take the job. And I took the job. And I wrote him a letter, and I felt bad because he said be sure to come back. But I thought, here in Los Angeles I have a lot of relatives too, and they were pretty nice to me. And it's a nice place to live, just the climate and this impressed-- cleanliness it was.

And I took the job. And I worked for two years. I got an apartment, a room. No, first I had rooms with families, once or twice in two years. And I got a-- and I worked there, and they were happy with me and I with them. And not only that, at the end of the two years, my uncle, this bachelor uncle-- I wanted-- I saw too that working for somebody, always a watch repairman. Not only that, if you work for somebody and you have to deliver a lot of work, your eye gets tough, and it is--

And I am-- not only that, I was figuring, I work for somebody. I was making work for \$50 or \$60 a day. And I was making \$12. You understand? So we were discussing. And he was trying to help me. And he told me that here is new communities. You know, in Los Angeles, the immigration there, like now Florida, more. Everybody was going to that area-- that there are contractors who will build new communities. And after it's ready, they rent out homes, and they'll have already like a little shopping center.

So we looked in some places. And in one place I liked it very much. It was like in a corner store, a jewelry store. Not only that, they have people. In those days they had when jewelry people used to set up a jewelry store, with everything for sale. That was their business. And each new community, jewelry people or others, they would set up their business or a laundromat, everything ready. And then sell it as a business.

And in one place-- I don't remember the name-- I liked it, and I was about to buy something for myself. And I thought, I'll fix watches and have little bands and this and gradually increase it. And I could make a living and get married. I'm not like the best for some bachelors are-- I have time. I wanted to get married and to settle down because I understood life, you know.

And I saw my uncle. Here is an uncle 53 years old and a businessman and could afford to have a family or a companion, and he lives by himself in a bachelor's apartment. And all he does is watch television or radio-- there wasn't television yet-- radio, and go fishing. And he had-- his kitchen was-- had so many fishing rods, with all kind. He could-- an army of fishermen he could supply. And I said, that's not life.

And then I used to think like from the old country, what you-- you get old, you are by yourself and this. You have a family, a companion, and that's life. You are born and live, and then you get old and you leave children. It's like the rotation, the circling in a garden. And that's what our people-- and with the animal world, you know, you-- and only in the beginning I couldn't. If you can't before-- if you want to, but if you can't afford, you can't afford.

So this time-- before, I thought when I will be a watchmaker and I save money and I-- I'll tell you, I made an

investment, and it brought me in \$90 a month. I thought, my gosh, that's so good. Not only that, the fact that you can take money in a bank and it draws interest was to me such a blessing because while I was in the old country and in Russia, there wasn't. In Russia, the Russians came in and I lived in there for a year. There isn't such a thing as saving money and getting interest, you know. You could keep the money in the bank as safekeeping, but no interest.

And this alone, it was a blessing. My gosh, I thought like that. If a person lives for two or three years very, very-- he tightens his belt, you know, and saves up money, he has a helper working for him. The money is help. That's a blessing.

And as I said, I made-- after the two years, I made an investment. My uncle sold me a little bit of [INAUDIBLE], and I had profit \$90 a month. I thought it's a lot of money. However, I thought, if I can save up to get one more \$90 a month, then I said, first, if even you are a watchmaker, it covers you for a rainy day or if you get sick. And this, if you-- not this helps you live better and helps you save a little more. You know, my ambitions wasn't high.

But then I got the idea of getting that little store. And I was already looking for it. And I had set on one which I liked. And it so happened, my brother was working here. And he had a-- we had another brother, you know. And he was helping him, and he passed away. And he calls me up, and he tells me the brother died. And he said, I don't think to the funeral, if you come, what will you do. You'll come, and you'll go back.

But he said, you wait. I might need a helper. And you think about it. Would you want to come and be? And he said, I know the big city, Los Angeles, is better. But maybe you want to be here. As far as money is concerned, he said, this I can guarantee. You'll make out as good or better than you make with watch repairing.

So I thought for a long time. And I thought I'm in a stage where I'm-- my job-- usually, I respect the jobs. Now, many times I wonder when my kids get jobs or other people, they talk, if not I'll go another job. You know, I was still-- and I'm still like in that same old country, a job was a very valuable thing, if you got a job. For example, in Riga I had one job because you stick to it.

And so there too, my job, I valued it. You have a good job, you stick to it because you don't know if you'll get another. That was my psychology. In America it's different. People will leave jobs and look for something better. And they'll quit before they have another job, you know? So I thought, the job I will give up because I'm-- if I don't like it here, I'll come back and then we'll buy a little store.

And I said it to my brother. I'll come, and it'll be a tryout. If I like it, I'll like it. He said, yeah, that's the right idea. And I came, and I settled here.

So, How much more time do we have?

We have plenty of time.

Tell you another story. What time is it?

It's only a quarter after 11.

Oh, OK. So I settled here. I came here, and I stayed with my brother, with Miriam, for about two years. And then I got married. And this is a chapter by itself. But what I want to jump over to a chapter, which is interesting, something.

I was living here, then I got married, had a family. And everything was fine and dandy. But one time in Bellaire, while I was in Bellaire, I have an aunt in my-- still my father's sister. She's the only one who is still now alive, in Marietta, Ohio. And I went there several-- many times. And one time my aunt calls me. She used to call me to find how I am and how she is, for a conversation.

And she said she has a daughter, a married daughter in Columbus, Ohio. And they are religious. They're going to shul, and they go there every-- like you and I are now. So she said that Esther was there, and you know, she brought the rabbi from Columbus, Ohio. And Sadie, she is considered a smart woman, religious too. And we had a nice time-- from

Columbus, Ohio.

And she said, he's a very Jewish man. He's from England. I said, from England, what-- what's his name? She said, Wilansky, you know? Said I, Wilansky from England? Maybe, I said, when I was in Bergen-Belsen in the camp, we had a Rabbi Wilansky. I wonder if it is a son or a relative, or maybe nothing.

She said, do you know what? I'm going to call Esther and find out. So within an hour, within the hour, she said-- she called me back. You know, she said, that is the Wilansky. He was in Bergen-Belsen, she said. And he was the chaplain, a young man. And there I was, you know. How small the world is.

Anyhow, and I called him right back in Columbus. She called me and said, and the next day, I called. And in Columbus-- and sure enough. And then I came to see him. And it was a-- you know, we were like father and son. He was older already, with a great beard. So he came, and he was a rabbi, an Orthodox rabbi in Columbus. And we met and--

However, after a few months, they did not renew his contract in that synagogue. And he emigrated to Israel. So all I saw him is once, and I talked to him a couple of times. So that's something. Isn't that a--

Yeah. I just wonder if you have any conclusions or advice or anything, having gone through these--

Let me.

--experiences.

I think we should have another-- yeah, I-- sure, I have. I have. Let me think about it and have a clearer mind because one time I have been thinking about it, the conclusions or what to leave for the future generations about the experience. In fact, I feel that I didn't go through systematic. And were so many things what I left out. You know, the life, a base life in the ghetto or a base life when the Germans came, how we were worthless [INAUDIBLE] in one-- with one law. In fact, who made the laws?

Hitler gave them notions, and that a whole Jewish community of 30,000 or 40,000 like Riga become worthless. And anybody can kick you or spit on you or kill. You know, if you kill a dog, you'll be arrested and fined. In those days, if you killed a Jew, nothing, nothing.

Do you see any similarities, anything here that's--

I don't. I don't. I don't. And the system in America is different. However, I am a person now, with my experience, that everything can happen. It doesn't look like it will happen today or in the very near future. It would have-- in America, it should go through such repercussions because I don't know how a Hitler could grab or a-- can you envision? It could happen if totalitarian should take over. But with our elections, it could not happen because there is a two-party system. There will be always somebody who will fight back.

However, if a good speaker came, a good agitator, he can persuade that the Jewish communities is this and that. And we get excluded because Hitler didn't fight, in fact, half of the world. He fought only the Jews. However, today that is a superficial one to say. We have still sympathizers. We have this. However, look what happens, for example, what I notice.

Before the Jews and Jewish leaders were in esteem in America, here comes Sadat and he wins the hearts of America, Sadat. Sadat will go a long way in America. You watch and see. Before, for example, the Jewish financial support, Israel was on its first place. They gave them this. And the Arabs used to get little support. Now they even-handedness, it starts. Now, it could be a time when Egypt will get more. In fact, they get already as much as the Jews. And the Jews will get less.

Then another thing, for example, the sympathy, how the Arabs worked it out. When they get from the PLO sympathy, they get equal. They compare to the Jews. Here, the Jews didn't have a land, and we became Zionist and worked for the

land. And here the Jews made homeless the Palestinians, which is not the truth. They don't recognize, for example, that Israel belongs to the Jews and they were just expelled for a long period of time.

And the Arabs, another thing what, the Arabs came to Israel after the Jews start settling there. Because at the time of the Balfour Declaration, only 300,000 Arabs lived in Israel. And as soon as the Jews started building up, they came and lived from on the Jews [INAUDIBLE]. Or before the Arabs had their oil, Israel was attracting them because they were building, rebuilding. And the Arabs were asleep.

And now, while the Arabs are getting the wealth and power, they're getting sympathy together with it. And the Jew sympathy somehow disappears. We have what we suffered and we went through for the 2,000 years or the last-- or the Holocaust is little-- is little by little it's forgotten. So--

Would you do anything different?

Yeah. Yeah.

Considering your experiences, what would you do?

Yeah. Well, I don't know is it because of my age or of the experience. I personally am not a fighter. I don't want to say I'm a hero. You know, I cannot kill anybody, and I wouldn't like to be killed myself. But I think the Jews made the mistake. We didn't fight back. Of course, it was a mistake that nobody could foresee because nobody-- we had a lot of enemies in our 2,000 years history who threatened us. But there was never such an annihilation treatment. For example, the worst was in Spain. But they give you a choice-- leave the country or become a Christian.

When you say fight back, you mean physically.

Physically. Physically. I don't know what the outcome would have been. But if we would be big fighters, maybe the results, and they would have changed their tactics. It was so-- of course, there we didn't have weapons, arms, shooting arms. But they would knock on each Jewish door, you know. And sometimes a German would come unarmed, and he would-- or have a stick. And whatever he said, he said go out of the house. Go out and leave it. This house is not ours. You have to leave everything and go out. And they would acquire it, use this, and use-- if you have your valuables, take away, and then you had to go and go to a friend or relative or go somewhere and be outside. And somebody would let you in to stay over.

And when they had a ghetto, you go to the ghetto. And you had to press in, force in yourself. Some Jews were here in a room, would be two or three families asleep on the floor.

Would you recommend then that Jewish people be armed?

I'll tell you. I'm sure. In fact, I am, for example, Kahane, the Jewish Defense League leader, you know, I'm a sympathizer of him. However, he is, by the Jewish community, he has some followers. But the majority are against him. We can't do that. We can't. I am a sympathizer.