REALTIME FILE

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
FIRST PERSON: CONVERSATIONS WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
FIRST PERSON HARRY MARKOWICZ
AUGUST 1, 2018

REMOTE CART CAPTIONING PROVIDED BY:
HOME TEAM CAPTIONS
www.captionfamily.com

* * * * *

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility. CART captioning and this realtime file may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.

* * * * *

>> Bill Benson: Good morning, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. I am the host of the museum's public program *First Person*. Thank you for joining us. Our First Person today is Mr. Harry Markowicz, whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2018 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of twice-weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program for 2018 ends next week. The museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming First Person guests for next week and for our program in 2019.

Harry will share with us his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Harry a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our online conversation: *Never Stop Asking Why*. The conversation aims to inspire individuals and new generations to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises and what this

history means for societies today. To join the *Never Stop Asking Why* conversation, you can ask your question and tag the museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and #AskWhy. You can find the hashtag on the back of your program, as well. A recording of this program will be made available on the museum's YouTube page. Please check your program for details about the *First Person* website.

What you are about to hear from Harry is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction. We begin with this photograph of Harry and his older siblings, Rosa and Manfred or Mani, in 1941. Harry was born on August 9, 1937, in emigrated from Poland shortly after World War I.

This photo shows Harry's mother's family around 1914 in Widawa, Poland. Harry's mother is the second from the left in the back row, with the long braids. The others in the picture are Harry's aunts and uncles, 11 in all, and Harry's grandmother who is in the middle sitting next to her youngest child, Bolek. Of those in the photo, only three survived World War II: Harry's mother, her youngest sibling Bolek, and her sister Leonia, third from the left in the back row.

Here we see Harry's father, Max, in Berlin, Germany, in front of the capital building around 1919 or 1920. He had recently emigrated there from Poland.

On this map of Germany the arrow points to Berlin, where Harry and his family lived when he was born. When Harry was 1 year old, in 1938, a family friend who was a policeman warned the Markowiczes of an impending outbreak of violence against Jews in Germany. Harry and his family escaped to Belgium.

In May 1940, Germany invaded Belgium. This photo shows Belgian refugees walking in one direction to get away from the invading German army while British soldiers head toward the German troops.

The Markowicz family tried to escape and cross the border to France. On this map, we see an arrow on the right pointing to where the family had been living, in Antwerp Belgium. The family tried to cross the border to France, but they were denied entry. They rented a beach house in La Panne, Belgium. The second arrow, on the left, points to La Panne.

In 1942, Harry and his family went into hiding in Brussels; Harry and his siblings were placed separately in children's homes and with different families. Harry lived with the Vanderlinden family until the liberation of Belgium in September 1944. Here we see Harry with Mrs. Vanderlinden.

After the war, the Markowiczes resumed their life in Brussels. Here we see Harry and his family in Brussels. Harry and his parents emigrated to the United States in 1951, joining his siblings, who had emigrated in 1949 and 1950.

After arriving in the U.S. in 1951, Harry and his parents settled in Seattle, Washington, where his brother and sister had gone after their move to the U.S. He went to the University of Washington for his undergraduate studies then attended Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, for his graduate degree. At Simon Fraser, Harry's study in linguistics and particularly in sign language led to his career working with people with deafness. Harry then pursued graduate studies in Sociolinguistics at Georgetown University before going to work in France for five years. He returned to Washington, D.C, and became a professor of English at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the world's only university with programs and services specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing students. It was established by an Act of Congress in 1864.

After 30 years at Gallaudet University he retired in 2008. Harry also taught English

as a Second Language in Israel, as well as French in the U.S. and in Canada. Since his retirement, Harry has become very involved with this museum as a volunteer. You will find him at the Membership Desk on Wednesday afternoons. Harry also participates in the museum's writing program for survivors. You can read several of Harry's writings on the museum's website.

Harry and wife, Arlene, whom he met in Washington, D.C. but to whom he proposed in France when she came to visit, celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary on June 26th. Their son, Michael, celebrated his 33rd birthday this past Sunday. They live in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Today Harry's former colleagues from Gallaudet college, Rachel Hartig and Cathy Carroll, are here with Harry in the front row,

With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Harry Markowicz.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Harry, thank you so much for joining us and for your willingness to be our First Person today. You have so much to share with us and so we will just get started right away if that's ok with you.

>> Harry Markowicz: Sure.

>> Bill Benson: Your father settled in Berlin in 1919, married your mother in 1926. By the time you were born, in 1937, Hitler and the Nazis had already been in power for four years. Let's begin with you telling us what you can about your parents and their lives prior to your birth.

>> Harry Markowicz: Ok, I'll try because I don't remember much. [Laughter]

They lived a middle class life. I think my father was a small businessman involved in converting pelts into furs. They were somewhat religious but I don't think they were extremely religious.

>> Bill Benson: Your father was a soldier in the First World War; isn't that right?

>> Harry Markowicz: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Do you know anything about his service in the military?

>> Harry Markowicz: He never talked about it. Once when we were on vacation on the coast, my brother saw these two men riding horses along the coast, galloping, and when he got closer he realized one was my father. So presumably he was in the cavalry.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us how your parents met.

>> Harry Markowicz: They met at a wedding which took place in Danzig which at the time was an international city, not part of Poland, known as Gdansk. My father was about to be drafted, drafted again after serving in World War I, so he left Poland and went to Germany. So he couldn't go back there. There were other Jewish young men who had done the same thing, including distant relatives living in Berlin also. In fact, I think he worked with my father. He was getting married with a young woman from Poland. The marriage couldn't take place in Poland because he couldn't go back.

So after this wedding took place, this relative told my father, "Now it's your turn. Why don't you pick somebody from among the guests." And of course my father didn't have any choice. He picked my mother. [Laughter] He sent a telegram to her mother -- father was dead by then -- to tell her that she was getting married in Danzig and that she should bring her things because she wasn't going back to Poland after the wedding. They went to Berlin. So it all took place, two weddings, took place within eight days.

>> Bill Benson: I like that.

Harry, your parents are living in Berlin. Hitler comes to power in 1933. You told me that your father was among those who thought that the rise of Nazism just couldn't last. Will you say a little bit about that?
>> Harry Markowicz: Yes. Like others, he assumed that the world wouldn't let Hitler go on. He did apply for visas to come to the states but the number was way high.
>> Bill Benson: They did try, yeah.
>> Harry Markowicz: Apparently. My brother told me this. I don't know. But anyway, in the summer of `38, this policeman who had been the fiancé of the nanny my parents had when my brother and sister were young -- by the time I was born young German women could not work for Jewish families. But anyway, this policeman and my father were friends, remained friends over the years. The policeman came to my father and told him that things were going to be very, very bad, worse than they had been until then, and that he should get out of the country and get the family out. So my father took my sister and my brother to Aachen, to the resort town near the border of Belgium and Holland.
>> Bill Benson: I'm going to stop you there for a minute, Harry. I want to come back to that in a few minutes. So that was in 1938, but as you said, your parents had employed a German maid but she could no longer work for them because they were Jewish. So in that period up until then, after Hitler came to power, there already were many anti-Jewish laws put into place. Do you know what was happening to Jews, in particular your family, during that time?
>> Harry Markowicz: Well, my father wasn't affected so much by these laws. Basically Jews had lost rights to citizenship. In economic terms professionals couldn't practice, doctors couldn't --
>> Bill Benson: Jewish doctors could no longer practice.
>> Harry Markowicz: Lawyers. And so on. My father was not affected by that.
>> Bill Benson: Because he wasn't in one of the professions?
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. And also, he didn't have a store. Stores were boycotted. So he wasn't effected. Some of his competitors left Germany and business got better, ironically.
>> Bill Benson: So as you were saying, now it's 1938. He gets a warning from the policeman who says you really need to leave Germany. So he takes your brother and your sister and they go to Aachen.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. I was only 1-year-old at the time.
>> Bill Benson: And at home with your mom.
>> Harry Markowicz: Yes. I guess the idea was my father, brother, and sister were going to go to Belgium and then get my mother and I out somehow.

They were going with a group of people who were being smuggled and they ended up -- the German border comes together with both Belgium and Holland. Holland were not accepting refugees. They were caught by a Dutch patrol and turned over to the German authorities. My father was put in jail and my brother and sister apparently. The other kids were turned over to the Jewish community of Aachen and placed in Jewish families.

The police then contacted my mother in Berlin and let her know that her husband were in jail and that her kids were with a family and she could come and pick them up. So my uncle actually picked up my brother and sister, and my father was released from jail a week later, after the German authorities determined that he had paid his taxes including there was an exit tax. At the time, the exit tax amounted to 90% of a person's assets. He had paid all of his taxes so he was released.

He came back to Berlin. And then he left on his own, got into Belgium this time. He

then arranged for a Belgian man who lived near the border to drive us across, back into Belgium.
>> Bill Benson: Do you know -- was this before Kristallnacht or after Kristallnacht?
>> Harry Markowicz: This was just before Kristallnacht. I assume the policeman had advanced information. The police were ordered not to interfere in Kristallnacht, the pogrom.
>> Bill Benson: Maybe we should tell the audience a little bit about Kristallnacht. That took place the night of November 9 through 10, 1938.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. All over Germany, Nazi thugs attacked Jews, destroyed synagogues, set fires --
>> Bill Benson: Over 300 of them, yeah.
>> Harry Markowicz: Many stores were vandalized. 30,000 men were arrested and put in concentration camps in Germany. This was shortly before that.
>> Bill Benson: That your father was able to --
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. And we got out. This Belgian man drove us across in his car. Passed us off as his family.
>> Bill Benson: You told us about a couple of incidents that you were told about, because you were very young. One of them was they get to the border and have to figure out how to get through. Time matters and they can't find the car keys.
>> Harry Markowicz: Yes. The driver was called inside the custom house. Meanwhile, I guess, while we were waiting, my mother handed me the keys to entertain me. The driver came back. There were lots of keys so he was looking for the key. It was a moment when he wanted to be out of there.
>> Bill Benson: But you made it. So you went to Antwerp. Do you know how your father was able to support the family now that you're in Belgium in Antwerp, Belgium? What did your father do? He had given up his livelihood and was now in a new country.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. Belgium allowed refugees to stay but as I understand, my father and others were not allowed to work, to take up jobs. So he got into the business of changing currency. People wanted to leave Europe, or leave Belgium. To go to other countries you needed hard currency, that was American dollars and British pound, to involve in trading money. That's how he supported us.
>> Bill Benson: To support the family.

So 1939 comes, September 1, 1939, Germany invades Poland; World War II begins. But it was in May of 1940, May 10, 1940, that Germany invaded Belgium, where you were living. A few days later after that invasion your family fled for France. Tell us about your family's attempts -- about trying to leave Belgium and go to France. Tell us about that, including what happened to you once you got to the border with France.
>> Harry Markowicz: When Germany invaded Belgium, Belgium was neutral. But the Germans wanted to go through Belgium to get to France. Belgium is a very small country, eight million people.

During World War I, the same thing happened. Belgium was invaded. And the Belgian civilians were treated very poorly by the German soldiers. Many were killed. So the Belgian population was very afraid when Germany invaded again and they wanted to get out of Belgium, too. So there was apparently between one and two million people on the roads trying to get to France and we were among them.
>> Bill Benson: So here's, as you said, two million people fleeing on the roads with few cars, carts, you know, baggage, bikes, whatever they could. Do you have any sense of what that

was like for your family?
>> Harry Markowicz: Well, we started off with four other families they rented a large truck with a driver who was supposed to drive us to the border. But when we -- we were going along the coast. To get to the coast, they went through Belgium. And there the driver said, "I'm not going any further." There were so many people on the road. He was afraid of running out of gas, whatever.
>> Bill Benson: You're on your own now.
>> Harry Markowicz: So one of the other families, we were related to them, and our family, we walked together. The other family bought -- I don't know what it's called. I think a surrey -- some resort town, like a bicycle, three or four-wheel contraption that you pedal around tourists. Imagine yourself on Virginia Beach and other places. So they bought one of those. They put all of their belongings on top. And then the other family had a 3-year-old -- my cousin actually -- a 3-year-old girl. And I was also 3 years old. They put us on top. Everybody else was pushing and pulling to the French border.
>> Bill Benson: Presumably they had gotten to that point with a truck. They must have had to leave a lot of their personal belongings behind.
>> Harry Markowicz: They didn't take that much.
>> Bill Benson: Piled on to the cart.

And during that time you were strafed by German warplanes.
>> Harry Markowicz: Yes. My very first memory was being on the side of the road in a ditch with my mother and other people. The British had sent 300,000 soldiers over to France before Belgium, Holland were invaded. So they were along that border, French-Belgium border. They couldn't come into Belgium because Belgium was neutral but they were amassed along the border and as soon as Belgium was invaded, they moved in. So going in the opposite direction.
>> Bill Benson: Like the photo we saw earlier.
>> Harry Markowicz: So my very first memory is of being in a ditch, next to the road, and on the road next to me is a very tall British officer looking at the sky with binoculars. It was a comfort to my mother.

I was never scared, that I remember, during the war but I was always aware when the adults, my mother, my sister, or anybody else -- when they were afraid, I knew it, afraid or anxious. But at that point -- I remember falling asleep and then waking up and the officer was gone. And I asked her where he was. She told me they were gone. And I knew something had changed. She was anxious.

The British were being evacuated. If you saw the movie "Dunkirk" that came out last July, it tells that story. Doesn't show the refugees but.

The strafing I didn't know -- after the war, we never talked about what happened, my family, never talked about what happened. Recently, after I started volunteering at the museum, I started asking my brother -- he's the only one left so I asked him about that. He didn't remember being in a ditch. People have different memories. Why would would we be in the ditch? The Germans were strafing the road. Come by and get the people, refugees, off the road. And also we saw in a picture the British were on the side of the road. They had these little tanks. They were under the trees, basically hidden.
>> Bill Benson: Out in the open on the road.
>> Harry Markowicz: We were caught out in the open.
>> Bill Benson: With your belongings on the cart, with you on top, you get to the French

border. What happens there?
>> Harry Markowicz: Us and all of these people were stateless. We didn't have any citizenship. So we went back --
>> Bill Benson: Why didn't you have any citizenship? Why were you considered stateless?
>> Harry Markowicz: Well, by the time I was born, citizens in Germany --
>> Bill Benson: So you lost citizenship.
>> Harry Markowicz: Never had it. My parents lost their Polish citizenship when they left Poland.
>> Bill Benson: So you get to the border and you're considered -- you don't have citizenship. You're just stateless. You can't come in.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. So we went back a few miles from the border. Along the coast, my parents rented a villa. My father didn't have any more money left so they sub-rented the villa. According to my brother, there were about 50 people staying there. He told me that all night there were stragglers, British and Belgium soldiers, walking between houses going towards the beach where they were picked up by boats.

The next day my brother and sister would go to the beach. And on the beach there was a makeshift pier made up of trucks that the English had driven into the ocean to make a pier. Again, in the movie "Dunkirk," there are two scenes where it shows -- there were three in all.
>> Bill Benson: I remember that in the film. Yeah.

Going back to you got to the border, your mom -- I remember you telling me your mom pleaded with them to let you into France but to no avail. So you went back. Then at some point in the little village you were staying, the seaside resort, it was occupied by the Germans and your family returned to Antwerp which, of course, was now also under German occupation because all of Belgium was occupied. How did you get back to Antwerp and what was there when you got back there?
>> Harry Markowicz: Well, we start walking. Eventually we were picked up, we and many other refugees, were picked up by German trucks. They were coming back empty.
>> Bill Benson: A lot of irony about that, I would think. So the German empty trucks take you back --
>> Harry Markowicz: Also getting us off the roads. And they fed us.
>> Bill Benson: So what's waiting for you in Antwerp?
>> Harry Markowicz: Well, we still had the apartment. So we went back to live in Antwerp. For the first few months nothing much happened. And then October the German authorities started putting in anti-Jewish measures.
>> Bill Benson: Like you had been under in Germany; now you're under them in Belgium.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. I think maybe the first thing was Jews had to register. Everybody in Belgium had to register. Jews had to register as Jews so that they would know -- Western Europe in general, I think. In Belgium there were no ghettos like in Eastern Europe but they knew where you lived because you had to register under penalty, severe penalty, if you didn't.
>> Bill Benson: And you were not allowed to have radios. You couldn't have phones, no bicycles.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. And again, professionals couldn't work. Well, doctors could only have Jewish patients and Jews could only go to Jewish doctors; same with lawyers and so on.
>> Bill Benson: And then your father was called up for forced labor.
>> Harry Markowicz: At some point, maybe 1941, my father was called up. It was done

through the Jewish council that the Germans set up. He was to go to work.

They took men only, able-bodied men. They were sent to build bunkers along the coast of Belgium and France to prevent the British from landing. The first men who were sent there were made to write postcards to their families saying that everything's fine, we're working hard but we have food and lodging and everything's ok. [Inaudible]

So my parents decided to report at a train station on a certain day along with other men but didn't go. We left Antwerp and we moved into an apartment in Brussels. And there my parents didn't register us. It was a Jewish neighborhood. There was a lot of Jewish people living in that area. That's how my mother found the apartment. But we were unregistered but still in the Jewish neighborhood.

>> Bill Benson: So you would move to Brussels. And then in September 1942, you had already been living in Brussels, in this Jewish neighborhood, for about 18 months. At that point your parents made this really profound decision to take the family into hiding. Tell us what led them to decide to make that decisive step and then where did all go once they made that decision.

>> Harry Markowicz: In early 1942, the Germans started taking Jews -- well, at first what they did is ask for volunteers through the Jewish council. They announced that if you agreed to be deported, families would be kept together and there would be work and housing and food and so on. So their objective was to get 10,000 Jews to agree to do that, Belgium to meet the quota. But only about 4,000 Jews volunteered to go. So they didn't meet their quota; so the Germans changed tactics in August of 1942. They started having raids. They had two raids in Antwerp first. They came at night, surrounded Jewish neighborhoods. They had the addresses where people lived so they picked up everybody, whole families, old people, sick people, babies.

When the word got back to Brussels, people escaped, spread the word. It was obvious it was no longer safe. They were taking people who couldn't work. So at that point -- we didn't go into hiding yet. What happened was instead of staying at our apartment at night, we slept -- my mother had a brother who lived nearby but outside of the Jewish area. So we slept at my uncles -- uncle's and other friends.

So early September, September 3, I think, the Germans did the same thing in Brussels. They surrounded the neighborhood and took every Jewish person they could find. So right after that we went to hiding.

>> Bill Benson: And where did you go? Tell us about that.

>> Harry Markowicz: There were underground organizations, a dozen or more, that helped Jews. They helped by providing hiding places, by providing money when you're hiding. Can't work. Money was coming from outside of Belgium and from Belgium, too. They provided false ID cards. Jewish ID cards were stamped "Jew," so they provided false ID cards. And also everything was rationed, food was rationed. There was very little food for everybody. Would go to the black market to have coupons. One of the main things was finding hiding places for children.

>> Bill Benson: If I remember right, your parents first placed you and your siblings with an older couple, an elderly couple, but you didn't stay with them for very long. What do you know about that?

>> Harry Markowicz: These were neighbor that my parents knew vaguely. My parents asked them to move out of the neighborhood, out of the Jewish neighborhood, and take us with them. So they did. My parents paid them. After a short time, I don't know, maybe weeks, they moved back to the Jewish neighborhood. There were so many empty apartments. That wasn't such a

good idea.

Also, their grandson was living with them. And he joined the fascist Belgium organization. It was a political party before the war but then they became their own militia and eventually part of the German Army.

>> Bill Benson: Their grandson joined that.

>> Harry Markowicz: Grandson, 18-year-old. He did it as a job. He was also living with them. So my parents took us away from them.

>> Bill Benson: Is that when you went to the Vanderlindens?

>> Harry Markowicz: No. Meanwhile my parents moved into an apartment house that looked like it was vacant. Typically in Belgium vacant apartments or houses they whitewashed the windows, covered them with newspapers. So they lived in an apartment. There was another Jewish --

>> Bill Benson: That to the outside world looked like it was a vacant apartment. That's where they moved into?

>> Harry Markowicz: Right. And there was a neighbor across the street who went shopping for them, brought them the food, mail, newspaper, things from the outside. So I used to stay with my parents.

The second place was with my sister. It was out in the countryside. There was a villa with children, lots of children. I don't know what it was, what it was for. And my brother came to visit us and he realized there were some grown-up Jews, adults, living there and that was dangerous. So my mother took us away from there. Stayed with my parents again.

And after that the third place --

>> Bill Benson: Did you go to the Vanderlindens by yourself?

>> Harry Markowicz: I was with my sister at first.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us -- and your brother was somewhere else?

>> Harry Markowicz: They didn't tell me but he was a couple of blocks away with another family. It was a neighborhood of small houses built by the municipality for blue-collar workers; a very nice little place with a front yard, backyard. It was kind of an ideal place. Apparently there were about 12, 14 kids in that neighborhood hidden by different families.

>> Bill Benson: And you were with the Vanderlindens. What can you tell us about your time there? What was that like for you?

>> Harry Markowicz: Well, they were very good to me. The food was terrible. I refused to eat. I was 5 years old by then. And Mrs. Vanderlinden, I remember clearly, would take me on her lap to feed me, play games to try to get me to open my mouth. The protein consisted basically of lard which I choked at when I had to swallow that. So I was just refusing to eat. And the food was so bad I couldn't eat. I think maybe I just didn't because of the trauma of being separated from my parents.

>> Bill Benson: At some point the Vanderlindens put you in a Catholic school. Do you recall anything of that, what that was like for you?

>> Harry Markowicz: It was a Catholic school. The teachers were nuns. Belgium has two languages, French and Flemish. And this was a Flemish-speaking area and I didn't speak Flemish. Although we lived in Antwerp before which was also Flemish but I was too young to learn Flemish. So I only knew French and German. But all the kids spoke only Flemish. The nuns -- the teaching was all in Flemish. The nuns could speak French or some French individually but.

One day an older boy, 10, years old, came up to me and was speaking French.

Somehow he realized I was a French speaker. Then he introduced me to some other kids. I think it was all boys. I'm not sure. They spoke French, all the Jewish kids.
>> Bill Benson: So every one of the French-speaking kids in there was a Jewish kid in hiding there, essentially.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right.
>> Bill Benson: Did you take on the name of the Vanderlindens?
>> Harry Markowicz: Yes. My name has always been Harry. Harry is a German name but it is not a Belgium name. So I became Henry.
>> Bill Benson: Henry Vanderlinden.
>> Harry Markowicz: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: Where you lived with the Vanderlindens you said was a community built by the municipality, a little bit outside in the country. But eventually the Vanderlindens moved back into Brussels, taking you with them. Tell us why they moved back into the city and then what it was like for you in Brussels, still living with the Vanderlinden family. And your sister was gone by this point?
>> Harry Markowicz: As far as I know.

What happened -- I didn't know it then. Where my brother was staying there were two other Jewish kids. One day the Gestapo came to that house. They were looking for Jewish kids. They were Gestapo intelligence. The family had a grown-up son who was working in Germany. The Germans recruited workers in Belgium to work in various factories or farms. When they couldn't get any more volunteers, they took Belgians by force, for forced labor.

Anyway, the son was working in Germany on the railroad yard. He and some other Belgians were working together. They were given a pass to go home for five days. It took them three days just to get to Brussels. So they were late coming back. In the meantime, the railroad yard had been bombed. So all of these Belgians were arrested and the Germans suspected that among them there was at least one who was a spy for the allies. So they came to the house looking for a radio transmitter. My brother and the other two kids spoke to them in German. The Jewish kids knew they were there. They searched the house. They didn't find anything. They left. But before leaving they said, "We'll come back for you tomorrow."
>> Bill Benson: To the kids.
>> Harry Markowicz: To the kids, to pick you up. So of course, they didn't wait around. As it turned out, they didn't come back because they were not interested in Jewish kids. They had other business.

So my brother came over to where I was staying with my sister at the Vanderlindens and we all left. Because if the Germans were coming back, that would not be a good idea to stick around.

So in the meantime, my parents asked the underground organization that did the hiding of kids if they would be willing to move. And they paid for the move. Agreed to move into Brussels itself, to a new neighborhood. Nobody knew -- nobody realized that [Inaudible] So I was hiding but I was out in the open.
>> Bill Benson: As their child.
>> Harry Markowicz: As their child. I just had fake identity. I was pretending to be somebody I wasn't. I had to keep it secret from all the other kids.
>> Bill Benson: And for the Vanderlindens that was a big move because then they had to get new jobs and create a new life inside Brussels with you. Right?
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. But they were willing to do it.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us about your parents had moved into this building, as you said, that looked vacant but your mother, she would go out.
>> Harry Markowicz: Right. My mother, with blue eyes and blond with the help of bleach -- it worked. She could pass physically but if she opened her mouth -- she didn't know French or Flemish or very little. So it was very dangerous.

The underground organization separated the parents and the children. But not only that, they didn't tell the parents where the children were. They didn't want the parents to visit because that was dangerous. If the parents were caught, it would lead to the kids. And everybody was in danger. The Belgian families that hid us, the underground organization. Everybody was in danger then.
>> Bill Benson: If I remember right, though, there was an incident where you saw your mother, when you were with the Vanderlindens. Tell us about that.
>> Harry Markowicz: Despite the fact that the parents weren't supposed to know where the kids were, for some reason my mother always knew where I was. Maybe because I was the youngest. She came to visit me. I remember several occasions but on this particular occasion I was playing outside with another little boy. We were throwing a ball back and forth. And I saw behind him this person approaching and I realized it was my mother walking in my direction from the sidewalk which is only so wide. I had been told how to behave, what to do in certain situations, what not to do especially. But my mother told me what to do if I saw her obviously. So she was getting closer and closer. Eventually she walked right by me. We didn't look at each other.
>> Bill Benson: Harry, there's so much more you could share with us. I'm aware that we're running out of some time. So many more incidents like that you could share with us. Let's move, if you don't mind, it's now August or September of 1944, late in the war. Your mother took from you the Vanderlinden home as the Germans were retreating. The Normandy invasion was June 1944. And so now the Germans were retreating. It wouldn't be long after that that you were liberated. Tell us about your mother coming to get you from the Vanderlindens and what you remember about that time of liberation.
>> Harry Markowicz: My mother showed up. This was late in August. Of course we never knew when she would come. She would stay a while and then normally leave. But this time she said that she came to pick me up and take me back to my parents' hiding place. I didn't like the idea. By that time Is I was very close to the Vanderlindens.
>> Bill Benson: You had been with them for the better part of almost two years or a year and a half?
>> Harry Markowicz: A year and a half.
>> Bill Benson: A year and a half.
>> Harry Markowicz: And living with them was normal.
>> Bill Benson: Right.
>> Harry Markowicz: With my parents it was always stressful, I guess. We couldn't speak openly if we were in public. We had to whisper in German. There was always some uneasy feeling. But I didn't argue with my mother. And Mrs. Vanderlinden also didn't say anything. It was counterintuitive. The war was still on so why would she want me to be with them?

Anyways, I figured out why much later. I mean just recently through letters that my sister wrote -- to continue with this particular story, my mother and I were going back to my parents' hiding place. A street car was stopped. I was by the window. My mother pointed out the window and she said, "Look." And right next to us there was a little German truck. On top

of the truck there was a German soldier lying down with a big machine gun and he kept looking around both sides. The truck actually was being pulled by a horse. He must have run out of gas and broken down. So my mother said, whispered, "Look, they're running away."
She -- never forget that.

At that point I still didn't realize what was going on. Then we got to my parents' hiding place. I remember one time looking out and I saw at the corner these men came out, in the middle of the street. They were wearing coveralls like garage mechanics. And they were carrying boxes and boxes. They started opening the boxes and distributing rifles. I couldn't understand what was going on. They obviously were not German. They were not German uniforms. It was the Belgian Resistance, the partisans.

>> Bill Benson: Harry, tell us about your mother then. Your mother took you to a park which you described to me as kind of a happy pandemonium. So your mother takes you this park.

>> Harry Markowicz: Right. It was days after my mother picked me up. My mother took me -- I don't remember what she said but for some reason we were able to go out. Brussels had been liberated the night before. She took me to the park. I asked why my father wasn't coming and my mother says he hasn't been out in two years, hasn't seen any people; he's not ready to go out.

>> Bill Benson: He had not left that building in two years?

>> Harry Markowicz: Right.

So we were on the street. There were lots of civilians all going the same direction, towards the park. I knew the park. I had been there before. On the way we passed a tank. It was on fire. So I stopped to look. It was fascinating. It's not every day you see a tank on fire. I didn't realize then it probably was -- it was a German tank. It probably was hit by a Molotov cocktail.

Anyway, my mother grabbed me by the arm and dragged me and we continued to the park. More and more people were coming out and sort of almost running. We got there. There was a long line of tanks, and soldiers, British soldiers, hundreds of thousands of Belgian civilians. Everybody was hugging, kissing, crying.

My mother and I walked over to the tank. There was a soldier on top of the tank. We looked at each other. We couldn't talk with him. He put out his arm and my mother lifted me up, pulled me up. He held me in his arms. So I looked down at my mother and she said, "Give him a kiss." So I did. And then I looked down at my mother and she was crying. I couldn't understand why she was crying. She said, "It's ok. I'm crying from joy." I didn't know about that yet.

>> [Laughter]

>> Bill Benson: Right. After that -- Brussels was liberated in the fall of 1944, but the war continued in Europe, of course, until May 1945. In the little time we have left, you actually went back to the Vanderlindens. Tell us what you know about that.

>> Harry Markowicz: I don't know why I went back. I mean, the rationale from my parents' point of view. Looking back, I think I wanted to live with them at this point more than with my parents even though we were free. We were still foreigners. My parents didn't know the language. We were Jewish. I don't know why but I was embarrassed about being Jewish. I felt guilty. I knew it was stigmatized.

>> Bill Benson: If you don't mind, I think we're going to turn to our audience in the little time we have left to see if they have a couple of questions for you. Does that sound ok?

I'm going to ask you to stick with us because we're going to hear from Harry with

some closing words in a minute but we do have time for a couple of questions if we have anybody who is a brave soul and willing to put their hand up. If you do, we're going to hand you a microphone. We want you to use that. If you'll make your question brief, I'll repeat it to be sure we hear a and everybody in the room hears it. And if not, I always have plenty of questions I can ask, although we're close to the end anyway.

I think I see a hand back there. Yes.

>> What was the recurring feeling you had when all of this stuff was going on when you were a kid?

>> Bill Benson: Do you remember a kind of recurring feeling that you've had as a little kid going through all of that?

>> Harry Markowicz: It's the only life I really knew. I didn't have memories of life before the war. So things were normal. I have two kinds of normal with my parents normal and with the Vanderlindens normal. But, no, I can't say that I have recurring feelings.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. I'm -- oh, I think we have one more up here it looks like in the back.

>> I just wondered, how did your parents explain to you why this is happening to you or why this was happening to Jewish people at such a young age?

>> Bill Benson: How did your parents explain to you, as you recall, why this was happening to you, why you were going different places, why this was being done to Jews?

>> Harry Markowicz: If they explained anything -- I don't remember. I don't think explanations would have made sense at that age. I didn't understand.

>> Bill Benson: One more here. Yeah. Ok. I'll get you the mic if that's ok. Yeah.

>> I'm just so struck by the emotions of a young boy being separated from their parents, saying that you couldn't eat, and even just answering that question, as a young child and then given how survivors have contributed so much to telling that story and bringing it to present day and what we learn. I'm wondering if there's any survivors that are involved in talking to our government about what is going on with the separation of these families now where you vividly feel those feelings.

>> Bill Benson: Thank you for raising that. We're going to stay focused in the little time we have.

>> I apologize but I just know that they are very involved in education.

>> Bill Benson: Yeah, thank you so much.

I'm going to ask one last question. When Harry's done, he's going to remain on the stage and we invite all of you, any of you who want to, come up on the stage, ask another question of Harry, if you want, a great chance to do that. Just shake his hand, get your picture taken with him. Whatever you want to do. We welcome that.

Harry, one last thing I want you to share with us. You went back to the Vanderlindens. In part you told me your mom and dad had to kind of reconnect, had to find your breather sister, bring them back. They had a really awful incident as they were going -- if I remember right -- going to get your brother and sister. Will you share that with us? This is when they were talking to each other on the train, I believe.

>> Harry Markowicz: In the last year of occupation, my brother and sister were in a part of Belgium that required going there by train. Right after liberation the allies took control of the trains. So you had to get a permit to travel on the trains so my parents were not able to go right away. Eventually they got the permit to travel. And they went to pick up my brother and sister who actually had gotten permits to travel to Brussels and they crossed each other. On the train, my parents were whispering to each other in German. And some of the people on the

train overheard them. You have to imagine how the Germans were hated by the Belgians, still from World War I. So there they had two German-speaking people and they were ready to lynch them. They were saved by a policeman.
>> Bill Benson: Just the irony in that, that you just described. A policeman was able to intervene and rescue them.

We're going to close our program now except that we'll hear again from Harry in a moment. We have two more programs next week and then we'll close our 2018 season. All of our programs are on the museum's YouTube page, so we invite you to look at any of those programs. We encourage you to do that. And then we will resume again in the spring of 2019 and hope you can come back and join us.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person has the last word and so I'm going to turn back to Harry to close the program. When Harry finishes, our photographer, Lolita, will come up on the stage, take a photograph of Harry with you as the background. So we'd like you stay for that.

And again, as I said a moment ago, we do welcome you come up on stage afterwards and talk more with Harry if you would do that.

Harry, would you share your thoughts with us?
>> Harry Markowicz: Ok. During the Nazi occupation of Belgium, some Belgians collaborated with the Germans, for example, by volunteering to serve in the German Army or by denouncing Jews. Many more Belgians became involved in resisting the Nazi occupation. It took many forms. Some resisted passively. For example, the mayor and city council of Brussels and other small towns around Brussels refused to hand out the yellow Star of David that Jews were required to wear on their garments thereby delaying the distribution of these badges which turns out gave the Jews a little more time to find hiding places without being identified as Jews by the badge. There were other things.

There were also others who participated in active resistance, like collecting intelligence for the allies or disrupting rail traffic by destroying bridges and tunnels and other things like killing, assassinating, Belgian collaborators. Also, by rescuing allies, airmen, who had been shot down over Belgium and bringing them to safety. They were able to get back to England. All of these partisans were subject to be arrested, to torture, deportation to concentration camps or execution. 20,000 of them paid with their lives. Their motivation was patriotism. Many other Belgians, priests, nuns, ordinary people like the Vanderlinden family, thousands of them, were -- also put their lives on the line by helping Jews. That in itself is amazing that somebody would risk their lives and their family's lives for other people.

What is even more remarkable is that 90% of the Jews in Belgium, at the time the war started, were not Belgian citizens. They were refugees who were outsiders, were what the Nazis called vermin of the earth. Most of us were refugees from Germany or Austria or illegal immigrants from Eastern Europe, mostly Poland, where most of the Jews lived. [Indiscernible] resulted from a common humanity shared by all people.
>> [Applause]
>> Bill Benson: Stay standing, if you don't mind, while we get a photograph.