

1

00:00:31,109 --> 00:00:56,440

2

00:00:56,440 --> 00:00:58,290

Good afternoon and welcome. Thank you

3

00:00:58,290 --> 00:01:01,329

for joining us for First Person:

4

00:01:01,329 --> 00:01:03,261

Conversations with Holocaust Survivors. My

5

00:01:03,261 --> 00:01:05,010

name is Bill Benson. I have hosted the

6

00:01:05,010 --> 00:01:07,530

Museum's First Person program since it

7

00:01:07,530 --> 00:01:10,140

began in 2000. Through these monthly

8

00:01:10,140 --> 00:01:12,740

conversations we will bring you firsthand

9

00:01:12,740 --> 00:01:15,221

accounts of survival. Each of our First

10

00:01:15,221 --> 00:01:17,610

Person guests serves as a volunteer at the

11

00:01:17,610 --> 00:01:20,939

Museum. The Holocaust was the systematic,

12

00:01:20,939 --> 00:01:22,650

state-sponsored persecution and

13

00:01:22,650 --> 00:01:25,420

murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazi

14

00:01:25,420 --> 00:01:29,030

regime and its allies and corroborators. The

15

00:01:29,030 --> 00:01:33,450

Nazis who came to power in January of 1933,

believed that Germans

16

00:01:33,450 --> 00:01:36,060

were "racially superior" and that the Jews

were an

17

00:01:36,060 --> 00:01:38,560

alien threat to the so-called German racial

18

00:01:38,560 --> 00:01:42,170

community. Jewish Holocaust survivors are

those who were

19

00:01:42,170 --> 00:01:44,780

displaced, persecuted or discriminated

20

00:01:44,780 --> 00:01:50,000

against due to the racial, religious, ethnic,

social and political policies of the

21

00:01:50,000 --> 00:01:52,869

Nazis and their collaborators between 1933

22

00:01:52,869 --> 00:01:56,130

and 1945. This included inmates of

23

00:01:56,130 --> 00:01:59,250

concentration camps, ghettos and prisons

24

00:01:59,250 --> 00:02:05,580

as well as refugees and those in hiding.

We are honored to have with us today 2

25

00:02:05,580 --> 00:02:07,850

Holocaust survivor Peter Feigl to share

26

00:02:07,850 --> 00:02:10,229

his individual account of the Holocaust

27

00:02:10,229 --> 00:02:13,480

with us today. During our program, please

send us your

28

00:02:13,480 --> 00:02:15,840

questions and let us know where you are

29

00:02:15,840 --> 00:02:20,010

joining us from in the live chat. Peter,

30

00:02:20,010 --> 00:02:21,580

thank you so much for your willingness to

31

00:02:21,580 --> 00:02:23,370

join us today for this First Person

32

00:02:23,370 --> 00:02:27,140

program. Peter, you have so much to share

33

00:02:27,140 --> 00:02:30,069

with us, so let's get started. Please tell

34

00:02:30,069 --> 00:02:33,370

us, as a way to start, please tell us when

35

00:02:33,370 --> 00:02:35,730

and where you were born and a few details

36

00:02:35,730 --> 00:02:37,550

about your early life.

37

00:02:37,550 --> 00:02:40,600

>> Good afternoon, Bill and good afternoon

38

00:02:40,600 --> 00:02:44,050

to the audience. Yes, Bill, I was born on

39

00:02:44,050 --> 00:02:47,069

the 1st of March 1929 in Berlin,

40

00:02:47,069 --> 00:02:55,270

Germany. My father Ernst Feigl and my mother

Agnes Feigl, were living

41

00:02:55,270 --> 00:03:02,220

in Berlin at the time in what I would call

an upper middle class family.

42

00:03:02,220 --> 00:03:05,280

Quite comfortable. And my father was a

43

00:03:05,280 --> 00:03:08,330

graduate mechanical engineer. He was born

44

00:03:08,330 --> 00:03:13,080

in Vienna Austria, working in Germany. And

45

00:03:13,080 --> 00:03:17,721

as you can see in the picture, my father

46

00:03:17,721 --> 00:03:20,900

was very elegant. Summertimes were spent

47

00:03:20,900 --> 00:03:23,570

going to the sea shore or traveling to

48

00:03:23,570 --> 00:03:31,260

Switzerland, to Austria. So things were

very nice. And when I -- in 1933 when Hitler

49

00:03:31,260 --> 00:03:32,260

3

50

00:03:32,260 --> 00:03:34,720

came to power, I was four years old. And

51

00:03:34,720 --> 00:03:36,740

this is where I was inundated with the

52

00:03:36,740 --> 00:03:39,220

propaganda music that came out of the

53

00:03:39,220 --> 00:03:42,580

radio. It was a lot of marshal music and I

found it all

54

00:03:42,580 --> 00:03:46,511

very exciting. And I should add here my father

55

00:03:46,511 --> 00:03:49,470

was absolutely secular, wanted nothing to

do

56

00:03:49,470 --> 00:03:53,790

with organized religion. And I had no idea

57

00:03:53,790 --> 00:03:56,580

at all that at sometime I would be

58

00:03:56,580 --> 00:03:59,790

considered Jewish. So, Judaism was

59

00:03:59,790 --> 00:04:02,180

something I knew nothing about at the

60

00:04:02,180 --> 00:04:03,180

time.

61

00:04:03,180 --> 00:04:06,140

>> Peter from Berlin your family then moved

to

62

00:04:06,140 --> 00:04:09,879

Vienna Austria in 1937. That was a big

63

00:04:09,879 --> 00:04:12,390

move. How did that impact the way you were

64

00:04:12,390 --> 00:04:16,100

raised once you had moved to Vienna?

65

00:04:16,100 --> 00:04:17,940

>> When we moved to Vienna, which was my

66

00:04:17,940 --> 00:04:19,780

father's home town, of course he was very



67

00:04:19,780 --> 00:04:22,150

happy. He had two sisters living in

68

00:04:22,150 --> 00:04:27,080

Austria still. And my mother and father at

69

00:04:27,080 --> 00:04:29,180

that point had a conversation and they

70

00:04:29,180 --> 00:04:32,860

decided that since Austria was 95% Roman

71

00:04:32,860 --> 00:04:35,470

Catholic, had a long tradition of

72

00:04:35,470 --> 00:04:38,669

antisemitism, remembering the ranting and

73

00:04:38,669 --> 00:04:44,060

ravings of Hitler back in Germany. My parents

decided that it would be a good idea to have

74

00:04:44,060 --> 00:04:47,969

me

baptized and so I became Roman Catholic,

75

00:04:47,969 --> 00:04:48,969

4

76

00:04:48,969 --> 00:04:50,830

went to my First Communion. There I am in

77

00:04:50,830 --> 00:04:54,520

my beautiful communion suit in Vienna. For

78

00:04:54,520 --> 00:04:57,699

the first time I went to catechism,

79

00:04:57,699 --> 00:05:01,659

learned about Catholicism and from that

80

00:05:01,659 --> 00:05:05,930

moment on I considered myself a Catholic.

81

00:05:05,930 --> 00:05:08,360

>> Peter, your life of course would change

82

00:05:08,360 --> 00:05:11,759

dramatically when your family fled to

83

00:05:11,759 --> 00:05:14,229

Belgium, after Germany annexed, that is,

84

00:05:14,229 --> 00:05:19,020

seized control of Austria in March 1938. Why

did your

85

00:05:19,020 --> 00:05:21,159

parents decide to leave Austria? As you mentioned

Vienna

86

00:05:21,159 --> 00:05:24,580

had been your father's home town. So why did

87

00:05:24,580 --> 00:05:26,719

they decide to leave Austria and then what

did

88

00:05:26,719 --> 00:05:29,229

that mean for your life and for your

89

00:05:29,229 --> 00:05:32,360

parents once you arrived in Belgium?

90

00:05:32,360 --> 00:05:34,300

>> When Austria was annexed in March of

91

00:05:34,300 --> 00:05:39,750

1938, my father very very quickly, within

92

00:05:39,750 --> 00:05:42,051

a matter of ten days decided that we had to

93

00:05:42,051 --> 00:05:46,909

leave. I think he realized now that he is

94

00:05:46,909 --> 00:05:49,249

now considered a German citizen and

95

00:05:49,249 --> 00:05:52,289

subject to German Nuremberg Laws, the

96

00:05:52,289 --> 00:05:56,219

anti-Jewish laws. And he also had

97

00:05:56,219 --> 00:05:58,479

encouraged some of the disfavor of the

98

00:05:58,479 --> 00:06:01,439

Nazis while refusing in Berlin to

99

00:06:01,439 --> 00:06:06,720

cooperate with some of their efforts to

circumvent the Versailles Treaty that 5

100

00:06:06,720 --> 00:06:10,279

prohibited Germany from acquiring aircraft

101

00:06:10,279 --> 00:06:15,149

engines. So we left, one suitcase each, and

102

00:06:15,149 --> 00:06:16,930

my father was able to do this because he

103

00:06:16,930 --> 00:06:18,990

had multiple entry visas to a number of

104

00:06:18,990 --> 00:06:21,240

countries including Belgium where his

105

00:06:21,240 --> 00:06:25,430

company had an office. And once we

106

00:06:25,430 --> 00:06:27,899

arrived in Belgium, of course, I was very

107

00:06:27,899 --> 00:06:31,710

distressed at the time. I'm nine years

108

00:06:31,710 --> 00:06:35,619

old. I had to leave behind my electric

109

00:06:35,619 --> 00:06:41,590

train set and my toy soldiers, and so on

110

00:06:41,590 --> 00:06:44,119

top of that I find myself now in a country

111

00:06:44,119 --> 00:06:47,179

where I had to learn two new languages,

112

00:06:47,179 --> 00:06:50,770

French and Flemish. And of course I was too

113

00:06:50,770 --> 00:06:54,149

young to realize that my loss was nothing

114

00:06:54,149 --> 00:06:56,110

compared to what my parents' lost. They

115

00:06:56,110 --> 00:06:58,340

left everything behind, all of their

116

00:06:58,340 --> 00:07:00,240

belongings, furniture, silverware,

117

00:07:00,240 --> 00:07:03,409

crystal, paintings, you name it.

118

00:07:03,409 --> 00:07:06,219

>> Peter, before you go on I would like to

take

119

00:07:06,219 --> 00:07:08,869

you back to Vienna for just a moment. We have

a

120

00:07:08,869 --> 00:07:12,409

photograph of when Hitler came into Vienna

121

00:07:12,409 --> 00:07:16,369

himself. That was very relevant to you

122

00:07:16,369 --> 00:07:18,800

personally. Will you describe this scene

123

00:07:18,800 --> 00:07:23,331

for us?

>> Indeed, I'd be glad to. This was two 6

124

00:07:23,331 --> 00:07:26,199

or three days after the annexation. We

125

00:07:26,199 --> 00:07:31,089

heard that Hitler was coming to Vienna. I

was

126

00:07:31,089 --> 00:07:33,849

very excited about this. I heard he would

127

00:07:33,849 --> 00:07:37,819

be speaking near the city hall. I went

128

00:07:37,819 --> 00:07:42,050

away from home and joined in that mass of

129

00:07:42,050 --> 00:07:43,819

people there. There must be over a hundred

130

00:07:43,819 --> 00:07:46,189

thousand people. I'm in there somewhere.

131

00:07:46,189 --> 00:07:51,139

And we were all shouting, "Ein Volk, ein Reich,

ein Führer." "One people,

132

00:07:51,139 --> 00:07:55,050



one empire, one leader." And I was looking

133

00:07:55,050 --> 00:07:56,849

at the Hitler Youth parading in those

134

00:07:56,849 --> 00:07:59,479

snazzy uniforms that they had with the

135

00:07:59,479 --> 00:08:02,940

uniform came a dagger, oh boy, did I want

to join

136

00:08:02,940 --> 00:08:06,249

and get a dagger. And when I got home about

137

00:08:06,249 --> 00:08:08,809

four hours later my mother was beside

138

00:08:08,809 --> 00:08:11,810

herself. And a little bit furious and

139

00:08:11,810 --> 00:08:14,249

she said where in the heck have you been?

140

00:08:14,249 --> 00:08:17,969

I said to her proudly, "I saw our Führer."

Whereupon

141

00:08:17,969 --> 00:08:19,919

my mother slapped me left and right and

142

00:08:19,919 --> 00:08:22,739

said, "He is not our Führer and don't you  
ever forget

143

00:08:22,739 --> 00:08:27,959

it." I was very confused at the time. I really  
didn't understand yet.

144

00:08:27,959 --> 00:08:32,089

>> Thanks for telling us about that, Peter.

Before we turn back now to your life

145

00:08:32,089 --> 00:08:34,090

now that you're in Belgium with your

146

00:08:34,090 --> 00:08:36,180

parents, let me just recognize that we

147

00:08:36,180 --> 00:08:41,130

have viewers from it looks like all over

the country as well as the world. We have

148

00:08:41,130 --> 00:08:42,130

7

149

00:08:42,130 --> 00:08:44,540

viewers from Houston, Tennessee, Maine,

150

00:08:44,540 --> 00:08:49,800

Scotland, Canada, Argentina and Romania. And

then we have viewers from

151

00:08:49,800 --> 00:08:52,130

schools, Mitchell High School in Florida,

152

00:08:52,130 --> 00:08:54,990

Yorktown High School in New York, and

153

00:08:54,990 --> 00:08:58,680

New York University and Sonoma

154

00:08:58,680 --> 00:09:00,980

County in California. So we've got people

155

00:09:00,980 --> 00:09:04,190

watching you from all over the place. So

156

00:09:04,190 --> 00:09:08,360

Peter, you now are now living in Belgium.

157

00:09:08,360 --> 00:09:10,959

Your father sounds like he was remarkable

158

00:09:10,959 --> 00:09:13,629

as you explained, he refused to cooperate

159

00:09:13,629 --> 00:09:16,220

with the Nazis and therefore was black listed.

160

00:09:16,220 --> 00:09:19,269

Now you're in Belgium, a neutral country.

161

00:09:19,269 --> 00:09:21,340

Was your father able to resume his

162

00:09:21,340 --> 00:09:23,269

business, family resume your life, how

163

00:09:23,269 --> 00:09:26,149

safe did they feel in Belgium?

164

00:09:26,149 --> 00:09:29,960

>> Well, as I mentioned my father's company  
had an office

165

00:09:29,960 --> 00:09:33,490

in Belgium, so he was immediately

166

00:09:33,490 --> 00:09:37,290

employed and had no problem with that. And

167

00:09:37,290 --> 00:09:40,210

rumors of an impending war were already

168

00:09:40,210 --> 00:09:41,990

circulating throughout Europe at that

169

00:09:41,990 --> 00:09:45,490

time. And my parents were very happy to be

170

00:09:45,490 --> 00:09:48,060

in Belgium in a safe and neutral country

171

00:09:48,060 --> 00:09:51,310

that wouldn't be involved in the war. And

172

00:09:51,310 --> 00:09:56,640

despite the fact that we now were living

in a small furnished apartment after 8

173

00:09:56,640 --> 00:09:58,940

leaving all our possessions back in

174

00:09:58,940 --> 00:10:02,530

Vienna. At least the family was together.

175

00:10:02,530 --> 00:10:06,380

And things went quite well. When the war

176

00:10:06,380 --> 00:10:10,370

started in September of 1939, again, my

177

00:10:10,370 --> 00:10:12,550

parents felt well we have nothing to worry

178

00:10:12,550 --> 00:10:15,730

about. We are here in Belgium and safe and

179

00:10:15,730 --> 00:10:16,730

sound.

180

00:10:16,730 --> 00:10:18,339

>> And of course all that changed after

181

00:10:18,339 --> 00:10:21,350

the war began in September 1939, the

182

00:10:21,350 --> 00:10:25,399

following spring in fact in May 1940,

183

00:10:25,399 --> 00:10:27,690

Germany attacked Belgium and at that point

184

00:10:27,690 --> 00:10:30,379

your father was arrested. Tell us what you

185

00:10:30,379 --> 00:10:32,310

remember about your

186

00:10:32,310 --> 00:10:34,000

father's arrest and your family's response

187

00:10:34,000 --> 00:10:36,370

to his arrest and how that lead to your

188

00:10:36,370 --> 00:10:39,379

remarkable journey to France.

189

00:10:39,379 --> 00:10:44,629

>> Well, on the 10th of May, when

190

00:10:44,629 --> 00:10:47,500

Belgium was attacked, my father decided to

191

00:10:47,500 --> 00:10:50,870

go to work and see to it that his

192

00:10:50,870 --> 00:10:54,550

employees get paid. He was arrested by the

193

00:10:54,550 --> 00:10:56,810

Belgium authorities when they had an

194

00:10:56,810 --> 00:10:58,889

identity check and he pulled out a German

195

00:10:58,889 --> 00:11:02,339

passport. He was, of course, immediately suspected

of

196

00:11:02,339 --> 00:11:09,301

being a German paratrooper or fifth columnist.



And we were able to locate him about 9

197

00:11:09,301 --> 00:11:12,970

three days later. He was in detention and

198

00:11:12,970 --> 00:11:15,640

my father said to my mother, look, take

199

00:11:15,640 --> 00:11:19,290

Peter and your mother, my grandmother, my

200

00:11:19,290 --> 00:11:21,670

mother's mother who was also in Brussels

201

00:11:21,670 --> 00:11:23,800

at the time, get out of here. You don't

202

00:11:23,800 --> 00:11:25,650

want to get caught between two armies. You

203

00:11:25,650 --> 00:11:27,720

have the Germans coming from the east and

you have the

204

00:11:27,720 --> 00:11:32,160

Allies, the British and the French moving

205

00:11:32,160 --> 00:11:35,899

northward towards Belgium to try to help

206

00:11:35,899 --> 00:11:39,230

the Belgians defend themselves. So we

207

00:11:39,230 --> 00:11:41,470

followed his advice and we joined hundreds

208

00:11:41,470 --> 00:11:43,410

of thousands of refugees. You might have

209

00:11:43,410 --> 00:11:47,040

seen some of that in news reels of the

210

00:11:47,040 --> 00:11:49,689

days. The road were clogged with refugees

211

00:11:49,689 --> 00:11:52,069

carrying whatever they were able to carry,

212

00:11:52,069 --> 00:11:55,150

suitcases, backpacks, and so forth. We were

213

00:11:55,150 --> 00:11:57,949

being machine gunned about every 20 minutes

or

214

00:11:57,949 --> 00:12:02,690

so. German Stuka dive bombers would attack

215

00:12:02,690 --> 00:12:05,529

the roads, not necessarily to kill the

216

00:12:05,529 --> 00:12:08,769

refugees but to block them, the roads, so

217

00:12:08,769 --> 00:12:10,350

that the Allies could not come to the

218

00:12:10,350 --> 00:12:12,720

rescue of the Belgians. And when that

219

00:12:12,720 --> 00:12:16,170

happened we would jump in the nearest ditch.

220

00:12:16,170 --> 00:12:22,379

And I, 11 years old at the time, could

only think of one thing when I grow up I

221

00:12:22,379 --> 00:12:23,379

10

222

00:12:23,379 --> 00:12:24,379

want to become a pilot and be in the

223

00:12:24,379 --> 00:12:26,460

cockpit of an airplane and da-da-da-da-da

with a

224

00:12:26,460 --> 00:12:29,600

machine gun, that must be a lot of fun.

225

00:12:29,600 --> 00:12:33,759

>> That must have been a profound experience

for a little boy.

226

00:12:33,759 --> 00:12:34,821

What you were experiencing as you

227

00:12:34,821 --> 00:12:37,410

described, much less what your parents and

228

00:12:37,410 --> 00:12:39,560

the rest of the refugees were feeling

229

00:12:39,560 --> 00:12:42,399

tremendous fear and uncertainty about

230

00:12:42,399 --> 00:12:45,649

their future. Peter before we go on to you

231

00:12:45,649 --> 00:12:47,399

making it all the way to Paris, we have

232

00:12:47,399 --> 00:12:49,110

a question from one of our audience

233

00:12:49,110 --> 00:12:53,089

members, Judith and she asks, "When you left

234

00:12:53,089 --> 00:12:55,810

Vienna, what did your father's sisters and

235

00:12:55,810 --> 00:12:58,480

other family members do now that you were

236

00:12:58,480 --> 00:13:00,900

out of Vienna and living in Brussels? What

237

00:13:00,900 --> 00:13:02,700

happened to the rest of the family? Did

238

00:13:02,700 --> 00:13:05,009

they stay behind in Vienna?"

239

00:13:05,009 --> 00:13:08,480

>> Very good question. My father's oldest

240

00:13:08,480 --> 00:13:13,110

sister, married a non-Jew and lived in Innsbruck

and

241

00:13:13,110 --> 00:13:16,389

she survived the war. The other sister,

242

00:13:16,389 --> 00:13:19,240

his youngest sister was arrested in 1941

243

00:13:19,240 --> 00:13:21,930

when they rounded up Jews in Vienna and shipped

244

00:13:21,930 --> 00:13:24,759

to Ukraine in the killing fields and was

245

00:13:24,759 --> 00:13:31,870

killed there in June of 1941.

>> Judith, thank you for that question. So

246

00:13:31,870 --> 00:13:32,870

you 11

247

00:13:32,870 --> 00:13:35,140

made it despite all the terror fleeing

248

00:13:35,140 --> 00:13:39,899

from Belgium, you made it to Paris but once

in Paris your mother said we

249

00:13:39,899 --> 00:13:42,089

have to go south. What happened from

250

00:13:42,089 --> 00:13:43,089

there?

251

00:13:43,089 --> 00:13:44,089

What did you do?

252

00:13:44,089 --> 00:13:46,329

>> Well, as we arrived in Paris air raid

253

00:13:46,329 --> 00:13:48,850

sirens sounded, my mother said I didn't

254

00:13:48,850 --> 00:13:50,839

come here to be bombed so we managed to get

255

00:13:50,839 --> 00:13:54,040

on the train. And went to the south of

256

00:13:54,040 --> 00:13:58,970

France, the southwestern coast, Bordeaux,

where my

257

00:13:58,970 --> 00:14:05,180

mother, as law abiding citizens would do,

258

00:14:05,180 --> 00:14:08,129

immediately went to the police to register

259

00:14:08,129 --> 00:14:11,320

to try to get permission to stay there.

260

00:14:11,320 --> 00:14:13,569

And the French policeman said, "I don't know

261

00:14:13,569 --> 00:14:16,080

what to do with you. You are German, you married

262

00:14:16,080 --> 00:14:20,370

an Austrian which makes you Austrian but there

is no more Austria.

263

00:14:20,370 --> 00:14:22,779

And you are here with your mother and with



your son,

264

00:14:22,779 --> 00:14:27,089

you don't have a visa, you come from

265

00:14:27,089 --> 00:14:31,300

Belgium." They said the same thing there.

266

00:14:31,300 --> 00:14:34,499

And so they sent her to the Prefecture which

is the

267

00:14:34,499 --> 00:14:38,040

civilian government in that sort of county

268

00:14:38,040 --> 00:14:40,160

government. And there the man said, "Oh, you

269

00:14:40,160 --> 00:14:43,170

have to take a train and go to Oloron-Sainte-Marie

near the Spanish

270

00:14:43,170 --> 00:14:47,990

border. We have experts who know what to do

with you." So we took a train and when we

271

00:14:47,990 --> 00:14:50,519

got to Oloron, the train was 12

272

00:14:50,519 --> 00:14:54,110

surrounded by French gendarmes with machine

273

00:14:54,110 --> 00:14:57,199

guns. They loaded us into trucks and half

274

00:14:57,199 --> 00:14:59,959

an hour later they dropped us off into a

275

00:14:59,959 --> 00:15:04,741

French detention camp called Gurs. Gurs was

an

276

00:15:04,741 --> 00:15:08,860

awful camp. Had a total capacity of about

14,000

277

00:15:08,860 --> 00:15:11,389

prisoners. It had been built about two or

278

00:15:11,389 --> 00:15:14,250

three years earlier to hold refugees of

279

00:15:14,250 --> 00:15:16,811

the Spanish Civil War. You see a

280

00:15:16,811 --> 00:15:20,310

picture of it there. There were muddy

281

00:15:20,310 --> 00:15:25,889

paths in there as the barracks held 60

282

00:15:25,889 --> 00:15:28,880

people in each. There were no cots or beds

283

00:15:28,880 --> 00:15:32,690

in it. We slept on the floor on straw.

284

00:15:32,690 --> 00:15:35,300

Notwithstanding the absence of the beds we

285

00:15:35,300 --> 00:15:39,019

still had bedbugs, fleas and body lice.

286

00:15:39,019 --> 00:15:41,029

There were no sanitary facilities in the

287

00:15:41,029 --> 00:15:44,350

barracks. Just one cold water spigot outside

to

288

00:15:44,350 --> 00:15:48,309

clean yourself. And the toilets, or latrines,

289

00:15:48,309 --> 00:15:50,910

were located 200 yards away. They were

290

00:15:50,910 --> 00:15:56,459

just open pits with a beam across them. It

291

00:15:56,459 --> 00:15:59,610

was an awful place with no food. We received

292

00:15:59,610 --> 00:16:01,949

lukewarm water called coffee in the

293

00:16:01,949 --> 00:16:04,899

morning and one slice of bread. At lunch you

had

294

00:16:04,899 --> 00:16:07,519

lukewarm water if you found a up couple

295

00:16:07,519 --> 00:16:11,850

slices of carrot floating in it you were

lucky, you had some vegetable and you got

296

00:16:11,850 --> 00:16:12,850

another 13

297

00:16:12,850 --> 00:16:14,430

slice of bread. And dinner was a repeat of

298

00:16:14,430 --> 00:16:19,910

lunch. So everyone was hungry. With the

299

00:16:19,910 --> 00:16:23,730

lack of sanitary facilities and absence of

300

00:16:23,730 --> 00:16:27,119

decent food, a lot of people were dying.

301

00:16:27,119 --> 00:16:29,860

There were cases of dysentery, typhoid and

302

00:16:29,860 --> 00:16:34,119

so forth. So it was a horrible situation and

303

00:16:34,119 --> 00:16:37,350

everyone just dreamed to get out of there

in some fashion

304

00:16:37,350 --> 00:16:38,350

and survive.

305

00:16:38,350 --> 00:16:40,089

>> In fact you were able to get out of

306

00:16:40,089 --> 00:16:42,990

there. You spent, I believe, six weeks in

Gurs

307

00:16:42,990 --> 00:16:45,059

and you and your mother were released and

308

00:16:45,059 --> 00:16:47,740

the two of you relocated to the town of

309

00:16:47,740 --> 00:16:49,220

Auch in France.

310

00:16:49,220 --> 00:16:50,220

>> Yes.

311

00:16:50,220 --> 00:16:52,129

>> What can you tell us about her being

312

00:16:52,129 --> 00:16:54,269

released and then how you made your way

313

00:16:54,269 --> 00:16:55,269

to Auch?

314

00:16:55,269 --> 00:16:59,970

>> Well my mother, a very strong willed woman,

315

00:16:59,970 --> 00:17:02,160

when France surrendered to the Nazis on

316

00:17:02,160 --> 00:17:05,209

the 22nd of June, shortly thereafter a

317

00:17:05,209 --> 00:17:08,180

German army inspection team came to see

318

00:17:08,180 --> 00:17:11,530

who was being held by the French, and my

319

00:17:11,530 --> 00:17:13,700

mother decided to bluff her way out of

320

00:17:13,700 --> 00:17:19,480

there. She rushed forward to the German

army officer holding her passport in her

321

00:17:19,480 --> 00:17:20,480

14

322

00:17:20,480 --> 00:17:23,500

hand. And shouted, "Heil Hitler. I am a citizen

of

323

00:17:23,500 --> 00:17:26,000

the great German Reich. I've been held by

these no good

324

00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:29,370

lousy Frenchmen here with my son and with

my

325

00:17:29,370 --> 00:17:31,670

mother for the past six weeks. I demand to

326

00:17:31,670 --> 00:17:34,730

be released immediately." And the German

327

00:17:34,730 --> 00:17:36,740

officer looked at the passport and told

328

00:17:36,740 --> 00:17:39,309

the French camp commander, you call

329



00:17:39,309 --> 00:17:42,299

the taxi for madam and 20 minutes later we

330

00:17:42,299 --> 00:17:47,150

were in a taxi heading north. And we wound

up

331

00:17:47,150 --> 00:17:50,799

in this town called Auch and this is where

332

00:17:50,799 --> 00:17:56,190

my story takes an important turn because

333

00:17:56,190 --> 00:17:59,140

we ran, for the first time, into people who

334

00:17:59,140 --> 00:18:02,840

did the right thing and helped out. It was

335

00:18:02,840 --> 00:18:07,580

a Catholic nun in a convent where my

336

00:18:07,580 --> 00:18:10,620

mother rang the doorbell. The nun

337

00:18:10,620 --> 00:18:13,460

after hearing our story decided to put my

338

00:18:13,460 --> 00:18:15,480

mother in touch with the food distribution

339

00:18:15,480 --> 00:18:20,610

center in Auch. The center was operated by

the

340

00:18:20,610 --> 00:18:23,630

Swiss Red Cross and American Quakers. It had

been

341

00:18:23,630 --> 00:18:26,880

organized about two years earlier to help

342

00:18:26,880 --> 00:18:30,060

refugees from the Spanish Civil War. And

343

00:18:30,060 --> 00:18:33,450

so with a part-time job offer, she was

344

00:18:33,450 --> 00:18:36,470

able to get police permission to remain in

Auch

345

00:18:36,470 --> 00:18:42,510

so we could rent a small room there.

But perhaps even more importantly she was

346

00:18:42,510 --> 00:18:43,510

15

347

00:18:43,510 --> 00:18:46,380

able to bring home some food every day. It

348

00:18:46,380 --> 00:18:48,720

took us about two or three months to

349

00:18:48,720 --> 00:18:52,440

relocate my father. It turned out

350

00:18:52,440 --> 00:18:56,020

he ultimately also wound up in Gurs. Of course,

we

351

00:18:56,020 --> 00:18:58,980

didn't know it at the time. And he was

352

00:18:58,980 --> 00:19:03,500

finally given a convalescence leave in

353

00:19:03,500 --> 00:19:10,320

March of 1943 -- excuse me, March of 1941.

354

00:19:10,320 --> 00:19:12,260

Because he had developed heart trouble, he

355

00:19:12,260 --> 00:19:16,770

was 54 years of age at the time already.

356

00:19:16,770 --> 00:19:19,100

And so the French thought he probably

357

00:19:19,100 --> 00:19:20,899

wouldn't survive so why pay for his

358

00:19:20,899 --> 00:19:23,390

burial, let his wife take care of it. So he

359

00:19:23,390 --> 00:19:27,150

was able to join us. Under the Vichy laws

which

360

00:19:27,150 --> 00:19:29,700

were even more restrictive as

361

00:19:29,700 --> 00:19:31,530

far as Jews were concerned than the

362

00:19:31,530 --> 00:19:34,690

Nuremberg Laws, my father was, of course,

prohibited

363

00:19:34,690 --> 00:19:37,990

from working. It was very difficult for them.

364

00:19:37,990 --> 00:19:43,380

He tried to earn a few francs by doing some

365

00:19:43,380 --> 00:19:46,730

illegal work, cleaning spark plugs and so

366

00:19:46,730 --> 00:19:49,860

forth. But at least the family was together

in

367

00:19:49,860 --> 00:19:53,930

that one room apartment which literally

368

00:19:53,930 --> 00:19:56,010

was living room, bedroom, bathroom,

369

00:19:56,010 --> 00:19:59,380

kitchen, all in one place.

370

00:19:59,380 --> 00:20:03,860

>> Peter before we move on from there, I

wanted to just say, we've got more viewers

371

00:20:03,860 --> 00:20:04,860

16

372

00:20:04,860 --> 00:20:05,960

joining us, if I can mention a few

373

00:20:05,960 --> 00:20:08,190

of the places. We now have people from

374

00:20:08,190 --> 00:20:11,100

Denmark, Ukraine, England and more schools

375

00:20:11,100 --> 00:20:13,350

are joining us, Community Montessori

376

00:20:13,350 --> 00:20:16,870

School for example in Jackson, Tennessee.

377

00:20:16,870 --> 00:20:19,270

So that's just more and more people

378

00:20:19,270 --> 00:20:25,040

watching you today. Peter, so there you

379

00:20:25,040 --> 00:20:27,070

were together, reunited again, your

380

00:20:27,070 --> 00:20:28,710

father's not well but you're together as a

381

00:20:28,710 --> 00:20:30,970

family and you remain together for I think

382

00:20:30,970 --> 00:20:35,370

about a year. In then in the summer of 1942,

you

383

00:20:35,370 --> 00:20:37,760

were sent to a summer camp run by the

384

00:20:37,760 --> 00:20:39,940

Quakers. But while you were away, while

385

00:20:39,940 --> 00:20:41,740

you were at that camp, your parents were

386

00:20:41,740 --> 00:20:45,020

arrested and deported to Auschwitz. When

387

00:20:45,020 --> 00:20:47,410

you heard the news of your parents'

388

00:20:47,410 --> 00:20:50,210

arrest, how did you respond?

389

00:20:50,210 --> 00:20:52,410

What did you know about the whereabouts of

390

00:20:52,410 --> 00:20:56,950

your parents at that time?

391

00:20:56,950 --> 00:21:01,830

>> Well, by the middle of 1942, rumors

392

00:21:01,830 --> 00:21:03,830

were circulating that Jews had been

393

00:21:03,830 --> 00:21:07,110

arrested and rounded up in occupied zone

394

00:21:07,110 --> 00:21:12,010

of France. And of course I'm 13 at that

395

00:21:12,010 --> 00:21:17,909

time. I really didn't fully understand



what that meant. And my mother was able to

396

00:21:17,909 --> 00:21:18,909

17

397

00:21:18,909 --> 00:21:20,799

get me into this summer camp operated by

398

00:21:20,799 --> 00:21:24,080

the Quakers. The camp was about 20 miles

399

00:21:24,080 --> 00:21:28,679

away from Auch and the director of the

400

00:21:28,679 --> 00:21:33,110

summer camp was a devout Catholic lady Mrs.

Cavailhon,

401

00:21:33,110 --> 00:21:35,559

who took me almost every morning with her

402

00:21:35,559 --> 00:21:40,640

to 7:00 mass. And she had no idea that

403

00:21:40,640 --> 00:21:45,120

under the Vichy laws I was considered Jewish.

404

00:21:45,120 --> 00:21:51,779

Until on the 27th of August, all of a

405

00:21:51,779 --> 00:21:53,840

sudden she called me into her office and

406

00:21:53,840 --> 00:21:55,880

said I'm very sorry, Pierre. I was called

407

00:21:55,880 --> 00:22:00,760

Pierre then. I just got a letter from Auch

408

00:22:00,760 --> 00:22:02,470

your parents were arrested yesterday on

409

00:22:02,470 --> 00:22:05,299

the 26th. And I don't know where they

410

00:22:05,299 --> 00:22:08,480

are and what's happened to them. But don't

411

00:22:08,480 --> 00:22:11,660

worry, I will organize a novena I'm sure at

the

412

00:22:11,660 --> 00:22:13,540

end of nine days of prayer your parents

413

00:22:13,540 --> 00:22:15,210

will be restored to you and I will be

414

00:22:15,210 --> 00:22:20,890

looking after you. And about two days

415

00:22:20,890 --> 00:22:24,900

later, French police came to arrest me. Mrs.

Cavailhon

416

00:22:24,900 --> 00:22:28,150

succeeded in bluffing them making them

417

00:22:28,150 --> 00:22:32,810

think I was much too ill to be moved. Also

418

00:22:32,810 --> 00:22:35,990

I should mention that on that 27th of

419

00:22:35,990 --> 00:22:38,519

August, I started writing a diary

420

00:22:38,519 --> 00:22:43,780

dedicated to my parents because I was

convinced that it was only a matter of 18

421

00:22:43,780 --> 00:22:46,490

time before I see them again. And I wanted

422

00:22:46,490 --> 00:22:49,650

to record on a daily basis what I was

423

00:22:49,650 --> 00:22:53,750

doing, and to show them that I behaved and

424

00:22:53,750 --> 00:22:55,679

did exactly as they would have expected me

425

00:22:55,679 --> 00:22:56,679

to do.

426

00:22:56,679 --> 00:22:59,590

>> Peter, before we continue discussing

427

00:22:59,590 --> 00:23:02,580

your remarkable diary that you started at

428

00:23:02,580 --> 00:23:04,659

that point. I have a question from Ashley

429

00:23:04,659 --> 00:23:08,110

from St. Bart's School. "There you were

430

00:23:08,110 --> 00:23:09,840

with your mom and dad and then you were

431

00:23:09,840 --> 00:23:11,880

sent to the summer school in that summer

432

00:23:11,880 --> 00:23:15,799

of 1942. Do you recall how you felt moving

433

00:23:15,799 --> 00:23:18,179

away from your family in the midst of all

434

00:23:18,179 --> 00:23:21,370

you had been dealing with?"

435

00:23:21,370 --> 00:23:24,201

>> As I said, I was 13 at the time. Being

436

00:23:24,201 --> 00:23:27,940

sent to the summer camp in a way was a

437

00:23:27,940 --> 00:23:32,880

relief from being in that small one room apartment

in Auch.

438

00:23:32,880 --> 00:23:37,140

Perhaps even more importantly, since food

was very very strictly rationed

439

00:23:37,140 --> 00:23:39,440

in those days, at that summer camp

440

00:23:39,440 --> 00:23:41,549

operated by the Quakers, there was good

441

00:23:41,549 --> 00:23:44,779

food and there were other children and so

442

00:23:44,779 --> 00:23:47,220

I was quite happy being there. And I

443

00:23:47,220 --> 00:23:49,639

didn't give it a second thought.

444

00:23:49,639 --> 00:23:55,301

>> Peter, you told us about the start of

your diary in order to be able to share 19

445

00:23:55,301 --> 00:23:57,901

with your parents, when you saw them again,

446

00:23:57,901 --> 00:23:59,990

all that you were feeling and what you

447

00:23:59,990 --> 00:24:02,980

were doing. We have an image of the

448

00:24:02,980 --> 00:24:05,850

opening page of your diary. Will you tell

449

00:24:05,850 --> 00:24:08,570

us what these pages say? Then if you

450

00:24:08,570 --> 00:24:11,909

don't mind read some excerpts for us from

451

00:24:11,909 --> 00:24:14,789

your diary. This is written almost 80

452

00:24:14,789 --> 00:24:16,630

years ago by you.

453

00:24:16,630 --> 00:24:20,909

>> Right. So I wrote in the diary. I

454

00:24:20,909 --> 00:24:25,960

started off by saying, "This diary

455

00:24:25,960 --> 00:24:29,610

is intended for my dear parents. In the

456

00:24:29,610 --> 00:24:32,799

hope it will be reaching them both in good

457

00:24:32,799 --> 00:24:38,179

health." And one of my first diary entries

458

00:24:38,179 --> 00:24:42,470

on August the 27th said, "The mailman was

459

00:24:42,470 --> 00:24:45,840

here. I run to see if there is something

460

00:24:45,840 --> 00:24:49,669

for me. Praise the Lord. A postcard from you

461

00:24:49,669 --> 00:24:54,110

telling me that you are together and in the

Camp du Vernet.

462

00:24:54,110 --> 00:24:56,539

I'm happy. And I hope you will be released

463

00:24:56,539 --> 00:25:01,039



in view of dad's poor health." Later on

464

00:25:01,039 --> 00:25:03,799

September the 1st, for instance, I

465

00:25:03,799 --> 00:25:07,980

wrote, "The start of a new month. I wait

466

00:25:07,980 --> 00:25:10,720

to hear from you." And then on September

467

00:25:10,720 --> 00:25:15,049

the 3rd 1942, I wrote, "I'm deeply

468

00:25:15,049 --> 00:25:18,909

concerned. Mrs. Cavailhon has received a letter

with my

469

00:25:18,909 --> 00:25:21,871

baptismal certificate, three shoe ration

20

470

00:25:21,871 --> 00:25:26,179

coupons and nothing else is written. The

471

00:25:26,179 --> 00:25:27,880

letter is written in great haste, I'm

472

00:25:27,880 --> 00:25:32,660

worried. I fear that you have

473

00:25:32,660 --> 00:25:35,480

that you left me."

474

00:25:35,480 --> 00:25:37,669

>> I had the privilege as you

475

00:25:37,669 --> 00:25:41,179

know Peter of reading your diary and thank

476

00:25:41,179 --> 00:25:44,560

you for sharing those brief excerpts. It's

477

00:25:44,560 --> 00:25:47,280

so painful and poignant to read that there

478

00:25:47,280 --> 00:25:49,840

you are writing with the expectation that

479

00:25:49,840 --> 00:25:51,710

eventually they will read this diary and you

480

00:25:51,710 --> 00:25:55,289

talk about each day not hearing from them

481

00:25:55,289 --> 00:25:59,030

and how that made you feel. Question we

482

00:25:59,030 --> 00:26:01,620

have from one of the audience, from J

483

00:26:01,620 --> 00:26:06,250

Taylor is asking, did you remember since

484

00:26:06,250 --> 00:26:08,210

you did lose -- we'll talk later -- you did

485

00:26:08,210 --> 00:26:11,830

lose that diary for a very long time. Did

486

00:26:11,830 --> 00:26:13,880

you remember what you had written in that

487

00:26:13,880 --> 00:26:17,040

diary and I know we're jumping ahead, how

488

00:26:17,040 --> 00:26:20,750

did you feel later when you were reunited  
with your diary

489

00:26:20,750 --> 00:26:23,070

and rereading for the

490

00:26:23,070 --> 00:26:24,679

first time probably the words you had

491

00:26:24,679 --> 00:26:26,549

written so many years before?

492

00:26:26,549 --> 00:26:31,269

>> Well, as I will relate later. The diary

493

00:26:31,269 --> 00:26:35,510

was confiscated and disappeared for some 45

years

494

00:26:35,510 --> 00:26:39,789

before I recovered it again. It had been

495

00:26:39,789 --> 00:26:42,750

such a long time that I began to doubt

496

00:26:42,750 --> 00:26:45,649

whether I even wrote such a first diary,

497

00:26:45,649 --> 00:26:46,740

perhaps it was a figment of my

498

00:26:46,740 --> 00:26:50,720

imagination. You will be hearing more

499

00:26:50,720 --> 00:26:52,169

about that later.

500

00:26:52,169 --> 00:26:54,940

>> We sure will. Peter with assistance

501

00:26:54,940 --> 00:27:00,240

from the Quakers you arrived in Marseille

on October 6th believing that you would be

502

00:27:00,240 --> 00:27:03,510

leaving on a ship bound for the United States

but

503

00:27:03,510 --> 00:27:05,141

sadly that was not to be. On

504

00:27:05,141 --> 00:27:07,909

November 10th Allied forces landed in

505

00:27:07,909 --> 00:27:11,130

North Africa and Nazi forces occupied all

506

00:27:11,130 --> 00:27:13,659

of France, including the unoccupied zone

507

00:27:13,659 --> 00:27:16,029

where you were, which, of course, then

508

00:27:16,029 --> 00:27:20,350

stopped all ship traffic leaving Marseille.

With

509

00:27:20,350 --> 00:27:23,010

this escape route, this door out of France

510

00:27:23,010 --> 00:27:25,580

closed to you now, where were you able to

511

00:27:25,580 --> 00:27:29,289

find shelter from that point?

512

00:27:29,289 --> 00:27:34,549

>> As I wrote in the diary, when I

513

00:27:34,549 --> 00:27:37,020

realized that the ship was not going to

514

00:27:37,020 --> 00:27:40,610

sail to America, I said "Goodbye America."

I

515

00:27:40,610 --> 00:27:42,930

figured it would be curtains to for me at

516

00:27:42,930 --> 00:27:43,930

that point.

517

00:27:43,930 --> 00:27:49,110

>> I just have to say, Peter, when I read

that, that was so powerful

518

00:27:49,110 --> 00:27:51,889

just you simply wrote, "Goodbye America."

519

00:27:51,889 --> 00:27:55,599

That is exactly what you wrote. Just

incredible. 22

520

00:27:55,599 --> 00:27:59,110

>> Yes. I realized that this is the end of

521

00:27:59,110 --> 00:28:02,169

my dream and it would further separate me

522

00:28:02,169 --> 00:28:04,139

from my parents. I was still hoping

523

00:28:04,139 --> 00:28:09,049

somehow that we would be reunited in the

524

00:28:09,049 --> 00:28:13,580

coming days. But, now the Quakers had

525

00:28:13,580 --> 00:28:15,450

the problem what to do with the children.

526

00:28:15,450 --> 00:28:19,049

There were some 500 orphans that they were

allowed to

527

00:28:19,049 --> 00:28:20,769

send to the United States. Now they didn't

528

00:28:20,769 --> 00:28:22,440

know what to do with them. I was being



529

00:28:22,440 --> 00:28:25,669

bounce from one orphanage to another

530

00:28:25,669 --> 00:28:33,230

until January of 1943, when the rumors

531

00:28:33,230 --> 00:28:35,830

began to circulate in Marseille that Jews

532

00:28:35,830 --> 00:28:39,630

were about to be rounded up and arrested

533

00:28:39,630 --> 00:28:42,940

and sent eastward for resettlement, a

534

00:28:42,940 --> 00:28:46,279

euphemism, resettlement, no one really knew

what

535

00:28:46,279 --> 00:28:50,490

that meant. I got instructions on the

536

00:28:50,490 --> 00:28:53,530

15th of January to be ready at a

537

00:28:53,530 --> 00:28:55,299

moment's notice, I would be given

538

00:28:55,299 --> 00:28:57,809

instructions to take a train. And I

539

00:28:57,809 --> 00:29:01,309

ultimately arrived at midnight

540

00:29:01,309 --> 00:29:05,899

in a village high in the mountains about

541

00:29:05,899 --> 00:29:10,350

3200-foot elevation. January, it was ice

542

00:29:10,350 --> 00:29:12,399

cold, the road were covered with snow and

543

00:29:12,399 --> 00:29:16,730

ice and I was met by a young man named Daniel

Trocme. I had no

544

00:29:16,730 --> 00:29:22,960

idea where I was. And after a 2 hour hike,

I 23

545

00:29:22,960 --> 00:29:26,250

dropped in bed dead tired in a home not

546

00:29:26,250 --> 00:29:30,279

knowing where I was. And the next morning,

I

547

00:29:30,279 --> 00:29:33,120

sort of got oriented and I discovered that

548

00:29:33,120 --> 00:29:37,059

I was in a village called Le Chambon. And

this is a most

549

00:29:37,059 --> 00:29:42,169

unusual village, Le Chambon sur Lignon. I

was one in a group of

550

00:29:42,169 --> 00:29:48,049

some 24 kids in a home called Les Grillons

which was

551

00:29:48,049 --> 00:29:51,169

managed by Daniel Trocme. In that picture

552

00:29:51,169 --> 00:29:53,750

that you see, I'm the boy sitting on the

553

00:29:53,750 --> 00:29:58,399

far left in the dark suit. Always smiling,

554

00:29:58,399 --> 00:30:03,799

that's me there. So I learned that this

555

00:30:03,799 --> 00:30:06,930

village and the immediate area was in

556

00:30:06,930 --> 00:30:11,470

habited by Protestants who were a real

557

00:30:11,470 --> 00:30:16,270

minority in France. France is about 95%

558

00:30:16,270 --> 00:30:21,760

Catholic. And these Protestants who in

559

00:30:21,760 --> 00:30:25,150

their past experienced persecution in the

560

00:30:25,150 --> 00:30:27,970

16th century when they were persecuted

561

00:30:27,970 --> 00:30:31,309

by the Catholics and slaughtered. There

562

00:30:31,309 --> 00:30:34,190

was an infamous St. Bartholomew massacre

563

00:30:34,190 --> 00:30:38,159

in Paris where 10,000 Protestants were

564

00:30:38,159 --> 00:30:41,409

killed. They found refuge on this plateau

565

00:30:41,409 --> 00:30:48,279

and they are people who are fundamentalists

and who

566

00:30:48,279 --> 00:30:50,450

follow exactly what the Bible tells them

567

00:30:50,450 --> 00:30:54,370

to do. They were

568

00:30:54,370 --> 00:31:03,049

inspired by their pastor, Andre Trocme, who

when France surrendered to the Germans 24

569

00:31:03,049 --> 00:31:06,130

advised his congregation to fight the

570

00:31:06,130 --> 00:31:10,120

enemy with the weapons of the spirit. And

571

00:31:10,120 --> 00:31:12,200

with those words they understood what was

572

00:31:12,200 --> 00:31:16,370

expected of them and developed what I might

call a

573

00:31:16,370 --> 00:31:22,169

conspiracy of goodness. They, some 3500

574

00:31:22,169 --> 00:31:25,059

inhabitants in that village, managed to

575

00:31:25,059 --> 00:31:31,299

save and hide some 3500 refugees and most

576

00:31:31,299 --> 00:31:34,419

of those refugees were Jewish. They

577

00:31:34,419 --> 00:31:36,280

considered the Jews being people of the

578

00:31:36,280 --> 00:31:39,980

book. There was a documentary made many

579

00:31:39,980 --> 00:31:42,909

years later also entitled Weapons of

580

00:31:42,909 --> 00:31:45,269

the Spirit, where the producer of the

581

00:31:45,269 --> 00:31:47,940

movie asked one elderly lady shuffling

582

00:31:47,940 --> 00:31:51,920

towards her temple, Tll me madam, why

583

00:31:51,920 --> 00:31:52,920

did do you this?

584

00:31:52,920 --> 00:31:54,520

This was very very dangerous, it was

585

00:31:54,520 --> 00:31:55,980

against the law, you could have been

586

00:31:55,980 --> 00:31:59,660

executed for helping Jews." And she is

587

00:31:59,660 --> 00:32:01,629

holding a Bible in the crook of her arm

588

00:32:01,629 --> 00:32:04,519

and she taps it and she says, "But it says  
in the book

589

00:32:04,519 --> 00:32:07,009

right here that someone is sick you go to

590

00:32:07,009 --> 00:32:09,410

their bedside and you bring them cheer. If

591

00:32:09,410 --> 00:32:11,440

they are hungry you ask them to table and

592

00:32:11,440 --> 00:32:16,809

share what food you have. If they need



shelter you open your door and you take 25

593

00:32:16,809 --> 00:32:19,870

them in." So, for these people this was the

594

00:32:19,870 --> 00:32:26,059

natural thing to do. They did so and

595

00:32:26,059 --> 00:32:28,490

without trying to enrich themselves, which

596

00:32:28,490 --> 00:32:30,890

many farmer the during the war were able

597

00:32:30,890 --> 00:32:35,460

to do. And the entire community and

598

00:32:35,460 --> 00:32:39,190

surrounding area was named by Yad Vashem as

Just

599

00:32:39,190 --> 00:32:43,280

Among Nations. Because this is unique in

600

00:32:43,280 --> 00:32:46,600

the annals of the Second World War of so

601

00:32:46,600 --> 00:32:49,429

many people doing the right thing and

602

00:32:49,429 --> 00:32:50,889

saving so many people.

603

00:32:50,889 --> 00:32:53,480

>> Peter, I believe you told me that there

604

00:32:53,480 --> 00:32:58,039

were some 5000 refugees of one kind or

605

00:32:58,039 --> 00:33:01,009

another, mostly Jewish but not entirely that

were in Le Chambon

606

00:33:01,009 --> 00:33:04,500

there during the war. I just recently saw

a documentary, and

607

00:33:04,500 --> 00:33:06,740

they continue that tradition taking in

608

00:33:06,740 --> 00:33:11,820

refugees even in the year 2021. I'm going

to point

609

00:33:11,820 --> 00:33:14,720

to other viewers we have if that's okay, given

the

610

00:33:14,720 --> 00:33:16,840

role that the Quakers played for you in

611

00:33:16,840 --> 00:33:19,200

your life as you described to us, we

612

00:33:19,200 --> 00:33:21,129

have viewers from the Quaker School at

613

00:33:21,129 --> 00:33:23,679

Sandy Springs School in Maryland, just

614

00:33:23,679 --> 00:33:26,870

down the road from us. And we also have

615

00:33:26,870 --> 00:33:29,159

the Ohio School, which is part of the Tri

616

00:33:29,159 --> 00:33:33,720

Valley High School in Dresden and they are

reading your diary. Question from one the

617

00:33:33,720 --> 00:33:34,720

26

618

00:33:34,720 --> 00:33:37,860

viewers, Peter, is that when you were taken

in by

619

00:33:37,860 --> 00:33:41,020

the Quakers, did they know you were Jewish?

Did you tell them that you

620

00:33:41,020 --> 00:33:43,739

were Jewish?

621

00:33:43,739 --> 00:33:47,350

>> First of all to the Sandy Springs students,

one of my daughters

622

00:33:47,350 --> 00:33:50,299

went to Sandy Springs for a couple of years

too.

623

00:33:50,299 --> 00:33:52,179

>> How about that.

624

00:33:52,179 --> 00:33:56,690

>> Yes. Well, when the gendarmes came to arrest

me

625

00:33:56,690 --> 00:34:00,279

for the first time in the summer camp,

626

00:34:00,279 --> 00:34:04,090

Mrs. Cavailhon realized that I was considered

627

00:34:04,090 --> 00:34:05,879

Jewish and she wrote to the Quakers and

628

00:34:05,879 --> 00:34:07,350

said, "Look, you have to take this child off

629

00:34:07,350 --> 00:34:10,980

my hands, he is Jewish." And the Quakers

630

00:34:10,980 --> 00:34:14,380

said, "Well we can send some 500 orphans to

631

00:34:14,380 --> 00:34:17,840

America, have him fill out these forms." I

632

00:34:17,840 --> 00:34:20,060

put down on the form under religion

633

00:34:20,060 --> 00:34:23,350

Catholic. The Quakers wrote back, "Mrs. Cavailhon,

you

634

00:34:23,350 --> 00:34:24,710

don't understand we're trying to save

635

00:34:24,710 --> 00:34:27,580

Jewish children, not Catholics." She wrote

636

00:34:27,580 --> 00:34:29,860

back, by the way this

637

00:34:29,860 --> 00:34:31,530

exchange of letters and so forth has been

638

00:34:31,530 --> 00:34:36,580

found in archives and it's available. She

639

00:34:36,580 --> 00:34:38,169

wrote back and said, "No, you don't

640

00:34:38,169 --> 00:34:41,330

understand, when I show the gendarmes his

baptismal

641

00:34:41,330 --> 00:34:46,550

certificate, they tell me it's garbage. As

far as Vichy is concerned this child is

642

00:34:46,550 --> 00:34:49,470

considered Jewish. So, the Quakers, please

27

643

00:34:49,470 --> 00:34:51,120

reconsider." And they did and that's why

644

00:34:51,120 --> 00:34:53,850

they sent me to Marseille in the hope of

645

00:34:53,850 --> 00:34:55,720

including me in that ship that was

646

00:34:55,720 --> 00:34:57,280

supposed to sail in late November to the

647

00:34:57,280 --> 00:34:59,060

United States.

648

00:34:59,060 --> 00:35:00,700

>> Thank you, Peter. Thank you Lisa for

649

00:35:00,700 --> 00:35:04,330

that terrific question. Peter, in your

650

00:35:04,330 --> 00:35:08,580

diary, you marked the end of 1942, and the

651

00:35:08,580 --> 00:35:11,760

start of 1943 with photographs of your

652

00:35:11,760 --> 00:35:13,120

parents and I think we have an image of

653

00:35:13,120 --> 00:35:16,790

that. But soon after, your diary just

654

00:35:16,790 --> 00:35:19,780

suddenly ends as of the end of January,

655

00:35:19,780 --> 00:35:22,500

1943. Why did you stop writing in your

656

00:35:22,500 --> 00:35:24,350

diary?

657

00:35:24,350 --> 00:35:29,920

>> Well, it was confiscated by Daniel Trocme

658

00:35:29,920 --> 00:35:35,590

shortly after I arrived in Le Chambon.

659

00:35:35,590 --> 00:35:39,060

It ends abruptly on the 31st of January

660

00:35:39,060 --> 00:35:41,530

because he saw me writing in it and he

661

00:35:41,530 --> 00:35:43,690



looked at it and said if this falls into the

662

00:35:43,690 --> 00:35:49,320

hands of the Gestapo, the secret police, or  
the French police, it would be curtains for

663

00:35:49,320 --> 00:35:50,920

a lot of people because the diary

664

00:35:50,920 --> 00:35:53,880

contained many name, addresses, dates and

so

665

00:35:53,880 --> 00:35:57,500

forth. And that is why the diary stopped

666

00:35:57,500 --> 00:36:01,810

abruptly and disappeared for many years.

667

00:36:01,810 --> 00:36:05,780

>> Do you recall what you felt when Daniel

Trocme

668

00:36:05,780 --> 00:36:08,640

took your diary from you. 28

669

00:36:08,640 --> 00:36:10,090

>> Honestly no.

670

00:36:10,090 --> 00:36:14,190

>> No, okay. If you don't mind, Peter, because

Daniel Trocme

671

00:36:14,190 --> 00:36:16,710

played, in that short of time, he played a

672

00:36:16,710 --> 00:36:19,260

big role in your life. What happened to

673

00:36:19,260 --> 00:36:20,260

Daniel Trocme?

674

00:36:20,260 --> 00:36:24,180

>> Daniel Trocme was the cousin of the pastor

675

00:36:24,180 --> 00:36:28,560

Andre Trocme, the one who inspired the entire

676

00:36:28,560 --> 00:36:31,830

community to do the right thing. Daniel

677

00:36:31,830 --> 00:36:35,940

was also the director of a second childrens

678

00:36:35,940 --> 00:36:42,430

home in Le Chambon. This was a home that had  
older boys.

679

00:36:42,430 --> 00:36:47,010

Boys 17, 18, 19 years of age. And in June

680

00:36:47,010 --> 00:36:54,270

of 1943, the Gestapo came and arrested those

681

00:36:54,270 --> 00:36:59,090

students. They were all Jewish. And Daniel

682

00:36:59,090 --> 00:37:01,750

tried to go to their rescue and tried to

683

00:37:01,750 --> 00:37:08,160

save them. The police, the Nazis, arrested  
him.

684

00:37:08,160 --> 00:37:10,410

And wouldn't let him go. They absolutely

685

00:37:10,410 --> 00:37:14,810

couldn't understand that a non-Jew would

686

00:37:14,810 --> 00:37:18,010

bother to try and save these Jewish

687

00:37:18,010 --> 00:37:23,240

children. And ultimately, he was killed in

688

00:37:23,240 --> 00:37:29,820

Majdanek one of the Nazi death camps. And

he

689

00:37:29,820 --> 00:37:32,270

wrote a very very touching letter to the

690

00:37:32,270 --> 00:37:38,350

children of Les Grillons, the home where I

was in Le Chambon. He sort of knew it was

691

00:37:38,350 --> 00:37:41,570

one of his last days. He was a great great

692

00:37:41,570 --> 00:37:44,000

man.

>> Yeah. Thank you for that, Peter. Peter,

693

00:37:44,000 --> 00:37:45,000

29

694

00:37:45,000 --> 00:37:46,870

you stayed in Le Chambon for 10 months and

in

695

00:37:46,870 --> 00:37:49,790

September 1943, you were sent to a

696

00:37:49,790 --> 00:37:53,040

boarding school in Figeac. Tell us about your

time

697

00:37:53,040 --> 00:37:56,090

in Figeac and the preparations that were made

698

00:37:56,090 --> 00:37:59,100

to get you out of France and hopefully to

699

00:37:59,100 --> 00:38:00,100

safety.

700

00:38:00,100 --> 00:38:05,040

>> Well, while in Le Chambon I was provided

with

701

00:38:05,040 --> 00:38:08,590

false identity papers. My name was changed

702

00:38:08,590 --> 00:38:14,120

from Pierre Feigl to Pierre Fesson

703

00:38:14,120 --> 00:38:16,750

my place of birth changed from Berlin to Auch

in

704

00:38:16,750 --> 00:38:21,430

France. And I was instructed if I'm arrested

705

00:38:21,430 --> 00:38:24,510

and I'm asked about my parents I'm to say

706

00:38:24,510 --> 00:38:28,560

that they died in a bombing raid. And I

707

00:38:28,560 --> 00:38:31,830

was sent to this boarding school, a high

708

00:38:31,830 --> 00:38:38,290

school in Figeac and the idea behind that

was

709

00:38:38,290 --> 00:38:42,380

that the people in Le Chambon wanted to make

room

710

00:38:42,380 --> 00:38:45,110

to take in additional refugees. And also

711

00:38:45,110 --> 00:38:47,880

to give us an opportunity to continue with

712

00:38:47,880 --> 00:38:53,420

our studies going to school. So, I arrived

713

00:38:53,420 --> 00:38:58,940

there in Figeac around October of 1943. And

I

714

00:38:58,940 --> 00:39:01,470

began writing my second diary on the

715

00:39:01,470 --> 00:39:05,350

1st of January of 1944. Where again I

716

00:39:05,350 --> 00:39:08,490

was reporting daily events that

717

00:39:08,490 --> 00:39:13,160

occurred in town, what was happening

to me and so forth. 30

718

00:39:13,160 --> 00:39:15,460

>> Was your audience at that time Peter,

719

00:39:15,460 --> 00:39:18,040

when you started the second diary, did you

720

00:39:18,040 --> 00:39:20,360

have specifically your parents in mind as

721

00:39:20,360 --> 00:39:21,960

the principle audience?

722

00:39:21,960 --> 00:39:24,430

>> Indeed, I continued to write the diary

723

00:39:24,430 --> 00:39:27,660

essentially to my parents hoping that some

724

00:39:27,660 --> 00:39:31,280

day I would be reunited with them, that

725

00:39:31,280 --> 00:39:32,280

I would see them again.

726

00:39:32,280 --> 00:39:33,400

>> Okay. Peter, there is a question from

727



00:39:33,400 --> 00:39:36,940

Christie about your time in Figeac. Christie

728

00:39:36,940 --> 00:39:41,140

asks that, "At the boarding school in Figeac,

did you

729

00:39:41,140 --> 00:39:43,370

have to hide your identity there and were

730

00:39:43,370 --> 00:39:46,380

the other students kind to you?

731

00:39:46,380 --> 00:39:48,550

Did they help you? Did they help to make sure

you were

732

00:39:48,550 --> 00:39:50,770

safe?"

733

00:39:50,770 --> 00:39:56,560

>> Well, here is the story. I, of

734

00:39:56,560 --> 00:39:59,310

course, spoke French fluently without

735

00:39:59,310 --> 00:40:02,370

an accent and I had no difficulty

736

00:40:02,370 --> 00:40:05,010

whatsoever in integrating with the native

737

00:40:05,010 --> 00:40:08,340

Frenchmen in that school. And there were four

738

00:40:08,340 --> 00:40:11,530

other boys who came with me from Le Chambon

also with

739

00:40:11,530 --> 00:40:14,830

false identities, a couple of them had

740

00:40:14,830 --> 00:40:18,700

heavy foreign accents, Jewish accents. So

741

00:40:18,700 --> 00:40:24,170

I tried to keep away and apart from them

as much as I possibly could because I didn't

742

00:40:24,170 --> 00:40:25,170

want 31

743

00:40:25,170 --> 00:40:26,920

to be identified as being part of that

744

00:40:26,920 --> 00:40:30,720

group. Many many years I found out that

745

00:40:30,720 --> 00:40:33,270

indeed there was at least one person

746

00:40:33,270 --> 00:40:35,310

responsible for taking us into that school

747

00:40:35,310 --> 00:40:38,100

and that was the principal in that school,

748

00:40:38,100 --> 00:40:40,290

and he, of course, knew that we were there

749

00:40:40,290 --> 00:40:43,440

under false identity. So another person

750

00:40:43,440 --> 00:40:44,900

who did the right thing at great

751

00:40:44,900 --> 00:40:46,490

personal risk to himself.

752

00:40:46,490 --> 00:40:50,000

>> I know we are going to turn back to our

753

00:40:50,000 --> 00:40:52,070

audience for some more questions in a

754

00:40:52,070 --> 00:40:54,520

little bit. I wanted to ask you now to

755

00:40:54,520 --> 00:40:57,570

tell us about the escape that you did make

756

00:40:57,570 --> 00:41:00,450

from France to Switzerland in

757

00:41:00,450 --> 00:41:03,860

late May 1944, and you would remain there

758

00:41:03,860 --> 00:41:08,330

until actually 1946, a year after the war.

759

00:41:08,330 --> 00:41:10,440

Tell us how you got to Switzerland

760

00:41:10,440 --> 00:41:14,190

and when did you feel actually

761

00:41:14,190 --> 00:41:16,060

safe?

762

00:41:16,060 --> 00:41:20,020

>> Well, starting with again described in

763

00:41:20,020 --> 00:41:23,160

my diary, I got involved with some of the

764

00:41:23,160 --> 00:41:25,430

French underground, some of that French

765

00:41:25,430 --> 00:41:30,290

underground were actually Jewish boys in

766

00:41:30,290 --> 00:41:41,620

their early 20s. And they claimed to be

Boy Scouts. We punctured tires of the 32

767

00:41:41,620 --> 00:41:44,670

German army trucks in the school yard.

768

00:41:44,670 --> 00:41:46,810

We poured whatever little sugar we could find

769

00:41:46,810 --> 00:41:49,290

in their gas tank to prevent them to go

770

00:41:49,290 --> 00:41:54,110

out hunting for partisans and underground

771

00:41:54,110 --> 00:41:57,540

people. And I also cooperated with them and

772

00:41:57,540 --> 00:41:59,530

translated some German documents that they

773

00:41:59,530 --> 00:42:04,640

found. So, on the 12th of

774

00:42:04,640 --> 00:42:10,750

May of 1944, a German SS division, marched

into

775

00:42:10,750 --> 00:42:13,280

Figeac and ordered all males within the

776

00:42:13,280 --> 00:42:20,950

ages of 16 and 54 to report to a labor

777

00:42:20,950 --> 00:42:24,460

detachment. I had gotten a little bit smarter

by then,

778

00:42:24,460 --> 00:42:28,110

than I was when I was in a ditch looking

779

00:42:28,110 --> 00:42:31,850

at the dive bombers, and I realized that I

780

00:42:31,850 --> 00:42:35,210

better hide. So, I hid in the bell tower

781

00:42:35,210 --> 00:42:38,800

of the adjoining church. And spent the

782

00:42:38,800 --> 00:42:42,410

next 24 hours up there. I could watch in

783

00:42:42,410 --> 00:42:45,740

the distance the trucks being loaded with

784

00:42:45,740 --> 00:42:48,560

the men who reported as they had been

785

00:42:48,560 --> 00:42:51,090

ordered. And when I came down the next

786

00:42:51,090 --> 00:42:53,280

day, I found for instance that the other

787

00:42:53,280 --> 00:42:57,270

four boys who came from Le Chambon with me,

they had

788

00:42:57,270 --> 00:43:02,910

disappeared. And the Jewish underground

789

00:43:02,910 --> 00:43:05,320

contacted me and said look, it's too

790

00:43:05,320 --> 00:43:10,770

dangerous for you to remain here. We are



going to see to it that we put you in 33

791

00:43:10,770 --> 00:43:12,880

safety. Get ready to leave at a moment's

792

00:43:12,880 --> 00:43:15,010

notice. Again all of this is described in

793

00:43:15,010 --> 00:43:19,060

my diary. And shortly thereafter on the

794

00:43:19,060 --> 00:43:23,760

22nd of May, I, following the

795

00:43:23,760 --> 00:43:26,770

instructions I got, I got off at the

796

00:43:26,770 --> 00:43:29,660

railway station called Viry. I didn't quite

797

00:43:29,660 --> 00:43:32,470

know where I was. There were about 20 other

kids

798

00:43:32,470 --> 00:43:36,020

on that train but none of us knew one

799

00:43:36,020 --> 00:43:38,830

another. We were strict -- under strict

800

00:43:38,830 --> 00:43:44,510

orders not to congregate. We were met by passeurs.

These were

801

00:43:44,510 --> 00:43:49,080

people smugglers who were paid to help

802

00:43:49,080 --> 00:43:52,500

people go to the Swiss border and

803

00:43:52,500 --> 00:43:55,060

they instructed us on how to cross, when

804

00:43:55,060 --> 00:43:58,720

to cross, where to cross and so forth.

805

00:43:58,720 --> 00:44:05,290

I drew a sketch of that crossing. You

806

00:44:05,290 --> 00:44:07,880

can see France at the bottom and Switzerland

807

00:44:07,880 --> 00:44:10,210

is on the top part. There are two rows of

808

00:44:10,210 --> 00:44:13,580

barbed wire fences. We got over the first

809

00:44:13,580 --> 00:44:18,120

one. I had to run through the no man's

810

00:44:18,120 --> 00:44:21,030

land to the Swiss barbed wire fence, get

811

00:44:21,030 --> 00:44:23,860

over that and once we were over that fence

812

00:44:23,860 --> 00:44:28,400

a Swiss border guard appeared and arrested

813

00:44:28,400 --> 00:44:32,490

us and told us to get behind the building.

814

00:44:32,490 --> 00:44:42,530

So, we were then loaded on to trucks. And

taken to a triage center outside of 34

815

00:44:42,530 --> 00:44:46,570

Geneva. On the way we were looking at food

816

00:44:46,570 --> 00:44:50,090

displaced, grocery stores and so on. We

817

00:44:50,090 --> 00:44:52,370

saw oranges and bananas and all kinds of

818

00:44:52,370 --> 00:44:56,090

things we hadn't seen in years. We were

819

00:44:56,090 --> 00:44:58,570

salivating. Any how, in the triage center

820

00:44:58,570 --> 00:45:02,000

we were to be interrogated and as each one

821

00:45:02,000 --> 00:45:04,870

of us was called in for interrogation, someone

822

00:45:04,870 --> 00:45:07,970

whispered in my ear, be very very careful

what you

823

00:45:07,970 --> 00:45:10,160

say, they are sending the Jews right back

824

00:45:10,160 --> 00:45:14,390

into the waiting arms of the French and Nazis

on

825

00:45:14,390 --> 00:45:17,820

the other side of the barbed wire fence.

826

00:45:17,820 --> 00:45:21,210

So during the interrogation, I pulled out

827

00:45:21,210 --> 00:45:24,260

my baptismal certificate. And when I

828

00:45:24,260 --> 00:45:25,260

showed that to the Swiss --

829

00:45:25,260 --> 00:45:28,841

>> That you had been carrying secreted on

830

00:45:28,841 --> 00:45:31,240

your body for quite awhile, right?

831

00:45:31,240 --> 00:45:34,240

>> Yes, actually the people who organized

832

00:45:34,240 --> 00:45:38,290

my escape had sewn it in the lining of my

833

00:45:38,290 --> 00:45:43,540

jacket so I had to undo the seam and pull

834

00:45:43,540 --> 00:45:47,930

out the folded baptismal certificate and

835

00:45:47,930 --> 00:45:50,700

presented it to the interrogator.

836

00:45:50,700 --> 00:45:54,330

When he looked at it he said, "Ah, mais t'es  
catholique! Bienvenue en Suisse."

837

00:45:54,330 --> 00:45:56,960

"Ah! Well, you're a Catholic. Welcome to

838

00:45:56,960 --> 00:46:07,530

Switzerland." So with that my neck was saved.

And literally for me, my running, my 35

839

00:46:07,530 --> 00:46:11,140

hiding, my false identity, ended on that

840

00:46:11,140 --> 00:46:14,480

day. There is a mug shot that the Swiss

841

00:46:14,480 --> 00:46:19,170

did of me. And gave me a refugee identity

842

00:46:19,170 --> 00:46:24,510

booklet. And for me the war was ended

843

00:46:24,510 --> 00:46:26,090

about two weeks before the Normandy

844

00:46:26,090 --> 00:46:28,829

landings in June of 1944.

845

00:46:28,829 --> 00:46:32,150

>> Peter, were others -- did they in fact

846

00:46:32,150 --> 00:46:35,230

get sent back?

847

00:46:35,230 --> 00:46:38,200

>> Out of the group that I was with, no.

848

00:46:38,200 --> 00:46:40,910

But about ten days later another group of

849

00:46:40,910 --> 00:46:46,690

children was on that route toward

850

00:46:46,690 --> 00:46:50,030

Switzerland and the same woman who was in

851

00:46:50,030 --> 00:46:52,480

charge, sort of the mother hen to look

852

00:46:52,480 --> 00:46:56,820

after them, had already been picked out by

853

00:46:56,820 --> 00:46:59,680

the Gestapo. They were waiting. She and the

children

854

00:46:59,680 --> 00:47:04,110

were arrested and the mayor of Anemasse was

able to

855

00:47:04,110 --> 00:47:07,760

save about, I think, 20 of the 30 children

856

00:47:07,760 --> 00:47:13,610

that she was escorting at that time. The

857



00:47:13,610 --> 00:47:16,970

others wound up killed in Auschwitz. And

858

00:47:16,970 --> 00:47:19,650

the lady who was looking after them,

859

00:47:19,650 --> 00:47:22,600

Marianne Cohen, was tortured for three days

and

860

00:47:22,600 --> 00:47:27,150

executed and killed. So, it was a close

861

00:47:27,150 --> 00:47:29,000

call for me ten days later I would have

862

00:47:29,000 --> 00:47:33,480

been one of those.

>> Absolutely. Peter we have a couple 36

863

00:47:33,480 --> 00:47:35,460

questions from our audience if I could ask

864

00:47:35,460 --> 00:47:40,820

those of you. We have a question, how did

865

00:47:40,820 --> 00:47:46,020

you feel once you crossed that barbed wire

fence

866

00:47:46,020 --> 00:47:48,930

into Switzerland? Were you scare about what

the future

867

00:47:48,930 --> 00:47:52,850

held for you at that point?

868

00:47:52,850 --> 00:47:55,750

>> To be honest, I've never been introspective.

869

00:47:55,750 --> 00:47:57,720

I wasn't then and even today

870

00:47:57,720 --> 00:48:04,530

I tend to take life as it comes. And I

871

00:48:04,530 --> 00:48:07,051

wasn't particularly scared. My father had

872

00:48:07,051 --> 00:48:09,620

given me the name of a business associate

of his

873

00:48:09,620 --> 00:48:12,670

in Bern, Switzerland. I gave that name to

the

874

00:48:12,670 --> 00:48:14,910

Swiss authorities. They contacted that man

875

00:48:14,910 --> 00:48:18,220

and he and his wife who, they didn't have

876

00:48:18,220 --> 00:48:21,080

any children, decided to take me in.

877

00:48:21,080 --> 00:48:25,050

So, I was really quite comfortable in a

878

00:48:25,050 --> 00:48:31,760

Swiss home family, and things were going

879

00:48:31,760 --> 00:48:34,690

very well there. I was still wondering

880

00:48:34,690 --> 00:48:39,400

about my parents and didn't come to realize

881

00:48:39,400 --> 00:48:42,240

what had happened to them, although I had

882

00:48:42,240 --> 00:48:44,650

heard rumors about people being killed in

883

00:48:44,650 --> 00:48:49,820

the east. In January of 1945 when the Soviets

884

00:48:49,820 --> 00:48:52,890

stumbled onto Auschwitz, the first of

885

00:48:52,890 --> 00:48:56,770

the death camps. The free Swiss press

886

00:48:56,770 --> 00:49:03,061

published articles and photographs about

what was found there. And I'm afraid that

887

00:49:03,061 --> 00:49:04,061

37

888

00:49:04,061 --> 00:49:05,510

is when I had to come to the conclusion

889

00:49:05,510 --> 00:49:08,890

that since I hadn't heard anything from my

890

00:49:08,890 --> 00:49:10,600

parents, most likely, they must have been

891

00:49:10,600 --> 00:49:13,370

killed in Auschwitz. It wasn't until many

892

00:49:13,370 --> 00:49:17,890

many years later I found proof that.

893

00:49:17,890 --> 00:49:21,410

That wasn't until 1990s. And I found

894

00:49:21,410 --> 00:49:26,090

their name in a list of the convoys of all

895

00:49:26,090 --> 00:49:29,680

the convoys that left Drancy, a suburb of

Paris,

896

00:49:29,680 --> 00:49:32,430

for Auschwitz. And I discovered that my

897

00:49:32,430 --> 00:49:35,030

parents were on convoy number 28 which

898

00:49:35,030 --> 00:49:38,630

left Drancy on the 4th of September and arrived

899

00:49:38,630 --> 00:49:41,620

in Auschwitz on 6th of September.

900

00:49:41,620 --> 00:49:44,100

>> It took all those years before you knew

901

00:49:44,100 --> 00:49:47,030

with certainty what happened to your

902

00:49:47,030 --> 00:49:49,050

parents. Peter if you don't mind, we have

903

00:49:49,050 --> 00:49:53,010

a video question from Cecelia from Stanton  
High School.

904

00:49:53,010 --> 00:49:57,610

Let's go to that video question.

905

00:49:57,610 --> 00:49:59,730

>> How does it feel to tell your story now

906

00:49:59,730 --> 00:50:03,190

versus how you started speaking publicly about  
it?

907

00:50:03,190 --> 00:50:06,870

>> How does it feel to tell your story now

908

00:50:06,870 --> 00:50:09,160

versus when you started speaking publicly

909

00:50:09,160 --> 00:50:13,430

about it which was many years ago?

910

00:50:13,430 --> 00:50:16,850

>> I kept quiet about my past. When I came

911

00:50:16,850 --> 00:50:23,991

to the United States in July of 1946, my

grandmother, the one who was in Gurs with

912

00:50:23,991 --> 00:50:25,360

me, in the same 38

913

00:50:25,360 --> 00:50:29,190

camp, last time she saw me I was 11. And

914

00:50:29,190 --> 00:50:32,510

so now I'm 17 and a half but I'm supposed

915

00:50:32,510 --> 00:50:34,710

to be in bed by 9:30 in the evening and

916

00:50:34,710 --> 00:50:38,490

not supposed to go out with girls and do

917

00:50:38,490 --> 00:50:45,210

this and that. So, I told no one my story.

918

00:50:45,210 --> 00:50:48,730

The first question that my relatives, my

919

00:50:48,730 --> 00:50:50,590

grandmother asked was, "What are you going

to

920

00:50:50,590 --> 00:50:53,480

do in America when you grow up?" My answer



921

00:50:53,480 --> 00:50:56,860

is I am going into the aircraft industry.

922

00:50:56,860 --> 00:50:59,080

And I was told no you can't do that. Why

923

00:50:59,080 --> 00:51:00,080

not?

924

00:51:00,080 --> 00:51:02,710

They don't hire Jews. Well, I said, I'm not

Jewish. I'm

925

00:51:02,710 --> 00:51:04,300

Catholic. I did get into the aircraft

926

00:51:04,300 --> 00:51:10,110

industry. So, but I didn't tell that story

927

00:51:10,110 --> 00:51:13,860

until many years later. It was when my

928

00:51:13,860 --> 00:51:16,590

oldest of the oldest of my two daughters when

929

00:51:16,590 --> 00:51:20,430

she was about 17, 17 and a half, that I

930

00:51:20,430 --> 00:51:22,800

first really told them about my background

931

00:51:22,800 --> 00:51:26,450

and my history. That would have been in

932

00:51:26,450 --> 00:51:33,790

the late 1960's, early 70s. And I

933

00:51:33,790 --> 00:51:36,340

didn't become involved in telling this my

934

00:51:36,340 --> 00:51:39,430

story and speaking about it until the

935

00:51:39,430 --> 00:51:44,220

1980s when I again through a series of

936

00:51:44,220 --> 00:51:52,610

circumstances, got involved in talking

about my background and about Le Chambon.

937

00:51:52,610 --> 00:51:53,610

39

938

00:51:53,610 --> 00:51:55,810

>> Peter, we have several more questions

939

00:51:55,810 --> 00:51:57,680

and I want to be sure we get to. Before I

940

00:51:57,680 --> 00:52:00,420

turn to those questions I think probably

941

00:52:00,420 --> 00:52:03,220

everybody watching you right now does want

942

00:52:03,220 --> 00:52:06,560

to hear at least a little bit about how

943

00:52:06,560 --> 00:52:08,940

you got that diary back, the one that was

944

00:52:08,940 --> 00:52:13,440

confiscated by Daniel Trocme, but you got

it

945

00:52:13,440 --> 00:52:14,440

back.

946

00:52:14,440 --> 00:52:19,400

>> So, in the 1980 -- 81, 82, the company

947

00:52:19,400 --> 00:52:21,701

I was working with we were sued by the

948

00:52:21,701 --> 00:52:23,570

Algerian government, we needed an

949

00:52:23,570 --> 00:52:26,850

international attorney. I was advised to

950

00:52:26,850 --> 00:52:29,980

go and see, find one in Paris, someone

951

00:52:29,980 --> 00:52:36,600

named Samuel Pissar. As I was telling him what  
the problem was, he said, "You

952

00:52:36,600 --> 00:52:37,850

speak French very well, where did you

953

00:52:37,850 --> 00:52:41,460

learn your French?" Well, I learned in Belgium  
and in France.

954

00:52:41,460 --> 00:52:46,930

"Where in France?" Well I learned in Auch

and Le Chambon. "Le Chambon-sur-Lignon?"

955

00:52:46,930 --> 00:52:48,910

Yes. And he said, "Well I have a cousin who

956

00:52:48,910 --> 00:52:51,300

is a movie producer and he is about to do

957

00:52:51,300 --> 00:52:55,560

a documentary about Le Chambon. Can I give  
him your name?"

958

00:52:55,560 --> 00:52:59,030

And I said, "Sure." So this movie producer,

959

00:52:59,030 --> 00:53:03,200

Pierre Sauvage, contacted me and asked me  
would I

960

00:53:03,200 --> 00:53:05,970

appear in the documentary called Weapons

961

00:53:05,970 --> 00:53:13,061

of the Spirit. I have a small part as I'm

driving from the town of Le Chambon up to

962

00:53:13,061 --> 00:53:14,140

Les Grillons, the home 40

963

00:53:14,140 --> 00:53:17,660

where I was back in those days in the

964

00:53:17,660 --> 00:53:20,820

40s. And when that movie ultimately was

965

00:53:20,820 --> 00:53:23,470

shown on French movie screens, theater

966

00:53:23,470 --> 00:53:32,190

screens in late 1987, 87, 88, I received a

967

00:53:32,190 --> 00:53:35,840

letter from someone in Paris, a Monsieur Diamant,

and he asked

968

00:53:35,840 --> 00:53:37,950

me, "Are you the Pierre Feigl who dedicated

969

00:53:37,950 --> 00:53:40,590

a diary to his parents?" I thought that

970

00:53:40,590 --> 00:53:43,690

was a scam, but at the time I was going to

971

00:53:43,690 --> 00:53:46,660

Europe just about every five, six weeks,

972

00:53:46,660 --> 00:53:50,090

so I stopped in Paris and sure enough, Monsieur

Diamant

973

00:53:50,090 --> 00:53:53,020

has my diary. How did you get my diary?

974

00:53:53,020 --> 00:53:55,540

He said, "Well, you know, I'm a collector

of certain

975

00:53:55,540 --> 00:53:58,350

memorabilia. I bought it at a flea market

976

00:53:58,350 --> 00:54:02,080

in the south of France, on the Côte d'Azur,

about two or three

977

00:54:02,080 --> 00:54:04,560

years after the war and, by the way, I also

978

00:54:04,560 --> 00:54:06,570

published it in France about two or three

979

00:54:06,570 --> 00:54:09,700

years ago." Well I wanted my diary back.

980

00:54:09,700 --> 00:54:11,670

And so now he pleaded and he said, "I am a

981

00:54:11,670 --> 00:54:14,420

poor man. I had to publish it at my own

982

00:54:14,420 --> 00:54:17,300

expense." Make a long story short, I had to

983

00:54:17,300 --> 00:54:20,420

buy my diary back and I paid him \$265

984

00:54:20,420 --> 00:54:26,930

for it. I'm still chafing at the bit for having

had to do that but at least I got it back.

985

00:54:26,930 --> 00:54:29,580

>> I'm sure. But as it turned out a good

986

00:54:29,580 --> 00:54:35,941

investment on your part. Peter, one last



question before we turn to you for your 41

987

00:54:35,941 --> 00:54:39,280

final word, and this is -- this is from, I

988

00:54:39,280 --> 00:54:42,030

believe, a fellow survivor. The question

989

00:54:42,030 --> 00:54:45,630

she asks, "As we are among the last of the

990

00:54:45,630 --> 00:54:47,910

generation living among survivors

991

00:54:47,910 --> 00:54:51,040

and their incredible stories, what can we

do to

992

00:54:51,040 --> 00:54:54,320

continue to honor your legacy and those of

993

00:54:54,320 --> 00:54:57,050

the many we lost in the years to come?" And

994

00:54:57,050 --> 00:54:58,770

just from Aria.

995

00:54:58,770 --> 00:55:02,340

>> Well I think most important thing is to

996

00:55:02,340 --> 00:55:05,320

do at least in my opinion, to do what I am

997

00:55:05,320 --> 00:55:07,490

doing, what I have been doing since about

998

00:55:07,490 --> 00:55:11,490

the early 1990s. And that is to speak in

999

00:55:11,490 --> 00:55:15,831

schools, and to speak to teachers, many

1000

00:55:15,831 --> 00:55:17,740

states have mandated the teaching of the

1001

00:55:17,740 --> 00:55:20,920

Holocaust, but the teachers know very

1002

00:55:20,920 --> 00:55:25,030

little about it. And we the surviving

1003

00:55:25,030 --> 00:55:29,760

survivors, as I said I'm 92. I'm not going

1004

00:55:29,760 --> 00:55:32,120

to be around for much longer. But the message,

1005

00:55:32,120 --> 00:55:34,410

there is a message that we can convey

1006

00:55:34,410 --> 00:55:37,810

especially to the young people, to the

1007

00:55:37,810 --> 00:55:42,310

students. And when I speak in schools for

1008

00:55:42,310 --> 00:55:46,490

instance, I try to tell them how in my

1009

00:55:46,490 --> 00:55:50,270

instance, I knew nothing about Judaism. I

1010

00:55:50,270 --> 00:55:56,310

knew nothing about religion and in my

first grade in Germany I was taught to 42

1011

00:55:56,310 --> 00:55:59,850

hate Jews. And I believed my teacher who

1012

00:55:59,850 --> 00:56:02,380

told me that Jews were bad people. They

1013

00:56:02,380 --> 00:56:06,220

lie, they steal, they cheat. They are like

vermin. They should be

1014

00:56:06,220 --> 00:56:08,090

exterminated. You want nothing to do with

1015

00:56:08,090 --> 00:56:12,670

them. So you have to be taught to hate.

1016

00:56:12,670 --> 00:56:17,260

And as I got older I have noticed that in

1017

00:56:17,260 --> 00:56:19,720

many countries around the world,

1018

00:56:19,720 --> 00:56:23,340

unfortunately, there are leaders in

1019

00:56:23,340 --> 00:56:26,970

dictatorial states, as it was in Germany

1020

00:56:26,970 --> 00:56:29,290

for instance, where the leaders for their

1021

00:56:29,290 --> 00:56:33,480

own survival need to put whatever blame

1022

00:56:33,480 --> 00:56:36,450

they deserve on to someone else or they

1023

00:56:36,450 --> 00:56:40,650

need a scapegoat. Hitler for instance

1024

00:56:40,650 --> 00:56:43,750

picked on the Jews. They represented less

1025

00:56:43,750 --> 00:56:46,410

than 1% of the total population in Germany

1026

00:56:46,410 --> 00:56:49,850

at the time. But he blamed the Jews for

1027

00:56:49,850 --> 00:56:52,490

having lost the First World War. They

1028

00:56:52,490 --> 00:56:55,750

supposedly stabbed the German army in the

1029

00:56:55,750 --> 00:56:58,700

back. If it hadn't been for that Germany

1030

00:56:58,700 --> 00:57:03,760

would have won. There was a hyper

1031

00:57:03,760 --> 00:57:08,240

inflation blamed the Jews on that. There

1032

00:57:08,240 --> 00:57:11,020

was a depression and unemployment, blamed

1033

00:57:11,020 --> 00:57:14,940

the Jews for that. Or any scapegoat. So,

1034

00:57:14,940 --> 00:57:20,960

this happens too many times and for Hitler

got away with it by putting the blame on

1035

00:57:20,960 --> 00:57:22,110

a 43

1036

00:57:22,110 --> 00:57:25,180

minority. And also promising the

1037

00:57:25,180 --> 00:57:28,400

unemployed a job. I am going to make you

1038

00:57:28,400 --> 00:57:31,610

proud of the country again. We'll become

1039

00:57:31,610 --> 00:57:34,470

one of the most powerful countries in the

1040

00:57:34,470 --> 00:57:36,950

world. Just follow me, I will put you in a

1041

00:57:36,950 --> 00:57:42,020

neat uniform and people bought

1042

00:57:42,020 --> 00:57:45,350

into this, some in desperation. So when I

1043

00:57:45,350 --> 00:57:50,680

speak in schools to the students, I ask

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00:57:50,680 --> 00:57:53,780

them, you may be asking yourself,

1045

00:57:53,780 --> 00:57:56,040

what relevance does this have to you?

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00:57:56,040 --> 00:58:01,040

The answer is this. Each and

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00:58:01,040 --> 00:58:03,040

everyone of you in that school has either

1048

00:58:03,040 --> 00:58:05,810

been bullied by someone, was the bully or

1049

00:58:05,810 --> 00:58:09,470

has witnessed someone being bullied. This

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00:58:09,470 --> 00:58:11,680

is a typical example. You are being picked

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00:58:11,680 --> 00:58:16,280

on by someone stronger and make that bully

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00:58:16,280 --> 00:58:19,800

feel better. The next time that this

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00:58:19,800 --> 00:58:24,370

happened, it is your duty to immediately



1054

00:58:24,370 --> 00:58:27,590

stop it. Why should you stop it?

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00:58:27,590 --> 00:58:30,850

I give two good reasons, first one it is

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00:58:30,850 --> 00:58:33,450

the right thing to do. And everyone knows

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00:58:33,450 --> 00:58:36,040

right from wrong whatever your beliefs,

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00:58:36,040 --> 00:58:38,220

wherever you come from. But if that isn't

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00:58:38,220 --> 00:58:43,460

enough I will give you second good reason.

And that second one I would call it is survival.

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00:58:43,460 --> 00:58:44,460

44

1061

00:58:44,460 --> 00:58:45,900

Survival, why?

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00:58:45,900 --> 00:58:48,860

Survival because the day might come, let

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00:58:48,860 --> 00:58:51,740

us say here in the United States, where

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00:58:51,740 --> 00:58:53,581

there may be massive unemployment, there

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00:58:53,581 --> 00:58:58,080

may be another depression as there was in

1066

00:58:58,080 --> 00:59:02,290

the 1920s. And when that happens, a

1067

00:59:02,290 --> 00:59:07,020

leader might arise who will again need to

1068

00:59:07,020 --> 00:59:11,940

a scapegoat. In your school, you may be

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00:59:11,940 --> 00:59:15,700

the one who is part of that minority. It

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00:59:15,700 --> 00:59:17,370

may be because you speak with a foreign

1071

00:59:17,370 --> 00:59:18,960

accent, it may be because of the color of

1072

00:59:18,960 --> 00:59:20,670

your skin, maybe because you're wearing

1073

00:59:20,670 --> 00:59:24,260

the wrong clothes or whatever the reason,

1074

00:59:24,260 --> 00:59:27,050

you have freckles and have red hair. That

1075

00:59:27,050 --> 00:59:29,080

makes you the target.

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00:59:29,080 --> 00:59:30,080

>> Peter.

1077

00:59:30,080 --> 00:59:32,040

>> That is why you need to stop it.

1078

00:59:32,040 --> 00:59:34,170

>> Thank you, Peter. I know we're right at

the top of the

1079

00:59:34,170 --> 00:59:36,570

hour. I want, Peter, I wish we had the rest

1080

00:59:36,570 --> 00:59:38,261

of the afternoon to spend with you, thank

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00:59:38,261 --> 00:59:40,640

you for being willing to share, all that

1082

00:59:40,640 --> 00:59:42,360

you have said, it's been profound. What a

1083

00:59:42,360 --> 00:59:45,540

remarkable story you are sharing with us

1084

00:59:45,540 --> 00:59:49,560

and important lessons for everyone. I want

to thank our audience. I also want to 45

1085

00:59:49,560 --> 00:59:52,070

thank our sponsors particular the Lewis

1086

00:59:52,070 --> 00:59:54,820

Franklin Smith Foundation for all of their

1087

00:59:54,820 --> 00:59:57,160

support and with additional support from

1088

00:59:57,160 --> 01:00:00,150

Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. Please

join

1089

01:00:00,150 --> 01:00:04,280

us for our next program on May 8th with Theodore

Klayman.

1090

01:00:04,280 --> 01:00:07,220

Thank you so much.

1091

01:00:07,220 --> 01:00:11,470

>> Thank you, audience. Thank you, Bill, and

thank you for the

1092

01:00:11,470 --> 01:00:12,520

supporters of the museum.

1093

01:00:12,520 --> 01:00:13,520

>> Thank you, Peter.

1094

01:00:13,520 --> 01:00:19,520

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