

--shown officially in Paris on June the 16th, I think.

Oh, they just did that?

Mm-hm.

I have a pre copy of it.

Oh, wow.

But I just was showing here, in that particular instance--

That was taken in '98 when we were invited back.

In '98, we were at the-- the whole town was decked out in Italy, a caravan of peace, and among others, one of the survivors was saved--

Each of the survivors spoke in Italian. And one of the survivors spoke by the Nazi headquarters and said a woman-- is that where you're leading to? Nella?

Yeah. The woman what helped me-- he was injured, and they were-- he was put in a hospital. And this woman came, this girl, a young girl, came to visit him at the hospital, and he hadn't seen her in-- or don't whatever happened to her afterwards. And there she comes out of the car. I remember--

Oh my God. Really?

Really? And this is Walter Marx she went to visit?

Yes.

Yes.

OK. And did you know Nella, too?

Pardon?

Did you know Nella also or--

Yes.

OK. And she helped you?

Oh, you know the story?

Well, I read a little bit, but I want you to tell me the whole thing in your own words.

Did you read the book?

I--

He must if he said the names.

Well, I just noticed this. That's all. It says Walter Marx and Nella. That's all. This is the photograph in your room.

Yeah.

And what town was this in?

This is in--

Borgo.

This was in Borgo San Dalmazzo.

Where is that?

Borgo San Dalmazzo.

It's in the Piemonte region of Italy.

In the Piemonte.

In Italy.

[CROSS TALK] from the beginning.

Yeah, OK. Well, she said--

Well, this is in the middle. I just wanted to show it to you.

Oh, yeah.

Because we saw this here in the video that was being made.

That was made.

Was made. And we weren't sure if he took it from this picture what he took it from. Then they took another picture. Maybe I should go through--

Start from the beginning--

We're in the middle-- we're in the middle here--

--Charlie. Otherwise, you're going to get all--

No, I just saw the picture of New York in-- this is another story. I got a lot of pictures. Like I said, my house is a museum.

Well, your hand is on it. Turn the page.

Oh, here. He also used this picture here.

What he did this he-- this Walter Marx invited--

--invited her--

--her to come to the States as a-- this woman took Walter's mother to the train station, where she was deported and

murdered. So he was looking for her for many years and then found her when we came back in '98 because he didn't know her married name. And the hotel that her parents had was demolished.

--was gone.

So when he met her in '98, he brought her here. We took her to the UN--

They took her to the UN.

--sat in the Italy seat. And when she went back to Italy, she was Madame Famosa. Am I saying it--

Signora Famosa, the famous lady because--

OK. And Walter Marx was who, exactly?

And they said-- this is the ambassador to Italy.

Really?

Marx did the same trip as him over the mountain from Nice.

Oh, I see.

See, I had met a reporter that worked for Oggi, the Italian newspaper.

Oh, yes, right.

John.

And he said, any time you want to go to the UN, I have an office there. You can come down. So I took them to-- made an appointment, took them. And we walked to-- actually, the public doesn't get into these chambers.

Right.

This is all closed off to the public. But he took us to all the back corridors.

And then we took her to the Statue of Liberty, which is--

And then we took them to the Statue of Liberty, yes.

And through Harlem.

Oh, and through Harlem?

Well, everyone from Europe wants to see Harlem.

My cousin came over, and she wanted to go to the Cotton Club. Yeah, I don't know where they get--

To go where?

And they're amazed that it's Cotton Club, which is in Harlem.

Yeah.

I don't know. I don't even know how she heard about it.

Where are they from?

I'm from Ridgefield Park.

No, no, your relatives.

My cousin is in Monza. My--

Where?

Monza, in Milano. And then--

North of Milan, yes.

Yeah. And then I have-- my mother's family comes from near Orvieto.

Oh, he was there.

Oh.

I got bombed there.

Oh my God. Did you really?

I'm sure, yes.

American bombs.

And in his video he says that's where the good wine comes from.

Right. That's true. And then my father's family is from near Salerno. Yeah.

That's down there.

That's-- yeah, one into the other, yeah.

Do you speak Italian?

No, I'm learning.

No?

You speak Italian?

Yes.

Oh.

That's--

I'm sorry I can't speak to you in Italian.

Oh, you can speak to me Italian.

No, except I can't speak Italian.

Oh. OK. Where do we start?

All right. Well, before I forget, why don't you tell me a little bit about the video that is going to air? What's the name-- what's the name of the-- the title of it?

It's called A Pause in the Holocaust, and I emphasize the word "pause" because what happened is that we were chased throughout France, arrested, deported, and whatever. And there was a certain time that the Italian that occupied part of Southern France actually protected us.

Really?

They put back to us from the French, believe it or not, because the French came to arrest us. And they said, no, you can't do that. We're in charge here, and forget it.

Well, let me-- let me-- I'm sorry. So it's going to air you said in June?

Well, I got there in 1943.

No, no, I mean the documentary is going to be on in France in June? Or--

It will be officially dedicated at the-- at the Holocaust Memorial to the Shoah the Holocaust Museum in Paris. I have a copy of it here. It's 15 minutes long. You're welcome to watch it--

Oh, maybe.

--if you have the time.

So it was there at the time, OK?

Yes. And it will tell you the story, basically. My story was that I-- I would have to backtrack a little bit because--

I was going to ask you, you were born in Austria, is that correct?

That's correct.

And describe your life to me as a boy growing up in Austria before the annexation.

Well, before the annexation, I was a common citizen like anybody else. Unfortunately, my parents were divorced, and my mother was the only breadwinner. So I was more or less on my own.

I had-- I went to school, and when I came home after school, I just threw my school bags down, and out I went to play until March 1938, when Germany annexed Austria. Then the picture changed.

At first, we had to sit in the back of the class and were ignored, completely ignored. There were three Jews in the class, and we had to sit all the way in the back at unoccupied desks. And eventually, I was thrown out of school altogether.

And how old were you at the time?

11.

In 1938, you were 11?

Yes.

OK. I just had my birthday.

Oh, really?

Yeah. And then I was sent to a segregated school for Jews only, and that was a horror because every day, when we got out of school, they let the kids from the high school out about five minutes earlier. They would be standing outside of the school, and they would hit us, spit on us, tear our clothes off, and so on until I decided I don't want to go to school.

I walked the streets or sat in the streetcar and then went home again until my mother got notified that I'm a truant. So she says, well, we can't do that. In the meantime, she had tried to obtain visas to go anywhere and to no success. At first, we had to get the Austrian pass. Then the Austrian pass wasn't valid any longer. It had to be turned over into a German pass with the J, the red J stamped in there.

J identifying you as a Jew.

Yes. And when we-- we tried to obtain visas and stood in lines for Palestine, for-- wherever we wanted to go, if you wanted to go to England, you needed money. Wherever you wanted to go, you needed money.

Unfortunately, my mother worked for a Jewish lawyer, so he was no longer allowed to practice. She couldn't be employed any longer. So there was no money coming in, and we had no money to put down for the trip because most countries required that you have at least for one year to live on in their country so you don't become a burden to the country.

Were you actually trying to leave Austria at this time?

Yes.

Not just to visit, but were going to like--

Yeah, to leave for--

--get out-- get out of the country.

Right. So I got-- so we tried to go illegally to Switzerland. We got to the border. They-- we were told where to go, and we had to cross the brook, and we were told the brook is about ankle-deep water. You can just pick up your socks and shoes and just wade across. What we didn't know-- that three days before it rained up in the mountains, and when we got into the water, it got up to my neck.

Really? And when was this?

In 1938.

What month? Do you remember?

It to be around September, October, something like this. Now--

I'm just turning this around.

It's an Italian.

Well, I want to see you in the photo. I won't see you in the photo. Can I get it in the photo with you?

We got-- we got across on the other side and tried to shake off the water, and there comes a Swiss border patrol and pointing guns at us and says, [SPEAKING GERMAN], are you German Jews? We said, yes, we are. So they said, OK, pick up your stuff, and they marched us back over the bridge, back into the-- to the German border patrol, border post.

Well, that was fine. We had the German passport, and we had the amount that was allowed to carry. It was 10 marks, \$10, an equivalent to \$10. That's all we were allowed to have. So that-- and we said, well, let's try France. So actually, we traveled from one Jewish community to another, a Jewish community to the other and-- since we didn't have much money.

And we got to the French border, and a pastor-- gave him whatever we could give him, took us up to the border, and explained to us we had to go-- where we had to go. He took us up to the border and said, you go straight down there. You cross the railroad track, and you walk down to a Jewish family. And they will take you from there on. Fine.

So we got to the railroad crossing, and the train was being maneuvered. And there was an old man with us, another-- we were about six.

Six? And who are these people? Just your family, or they're just--

No, just people that are--

Refugees?

Other people that were fleeing. So we got to this railroad crossing, and the barrier was down. And so we stayed in the dark not to be seen, but this man was so impatient. He walked up over to the things. He walked back and forth. So obviously, he was seen by the switchboard. And when we crossed over, we got to the House of this family we were supposed to go, and the police came there and picked us up.

This was France.

In France. And they marched us right back across into Germany again. So what to do? Let's try Luxembourg. In Luxembourg, we got to Trier, which is on the French, Luxembourg, and German border. And my mother-- I don't know how she managed, but she got with one woman that crosses the border every day. She works in Luxembourg and lives in Germany.

So my mother and her were talking, and I pushed the baby carriage. And we passed the border patrol and just-- since we had her-- the woman had the pass. She just showed her pass, her pass, the--

Passport or the paper.

A permit.

Well, a visa. A permit.

Permit.

Yeah, permanent permit. And the two of them were talking, and I was pushing the woman's baby carriage. And we walked into Luxembourg. Oh, that was fine.

Was this still 1938?

Yes. We walked in. And there, we took the bus. We got to Luxembourg city. We got to the Jewish community, and they put us up in a hotel. And for three days, we were in that hotel, and the hotel was also frequented by ladies of the night.

And the police came and raided the hotel, and at the same time, they got us.

We were put in a prison, one of those medieval prisons.

In Luxembourg?

In Luxembourg, the stone walls, the little hole for air, and a heavy wooden door where the guy just can peep in, no toilet facilities, just a bucket.

You're like 11 years old at this time, right?

Yes. Just a bucket for the necessities and straw in one corner. That was the cell we were in.

That was your-- straw was your bed, I guess.

Yes, or whatever we wanted to--

Right.

And we were in there, and then they came, got us, and put us on the train back to Germany. We were desperate. We didn't know what to do anymore, no money, no place to go.

We still had the apartment in Vienna, so we went back to Vienna and said, well, whatever going to be is going to be. But then came the 10th of November, 1938, Kristallnacht.

Kristallnacht, yes.

The Night of the Broken Crystal. And we said, no, we can't stay there. And we said, well, we know the way to France. Let's do it on our own this time. So we did.

"We" bring you and your mother?

My mother and I, yes. So we went like we were supposed to go, got to this family's home. They gave us dinner, and they said, OK, we're going to take you to the Jewish community in Strasbourg, and in order to turn us over to somebody, they picked up the phone. They called up. And they says, OK, we'll meet in Place KlÃ©ber, which is one of the main squares in Strasbourg, at such and such time. We said, fine.

We got in the car, and you had to duck down so nobody in the village would see us. The man and his wife sat in the front, and they drove us to Strasbourg. We got to Place KlÃ©ber, and instead of the Jewish committee being there, the French secret police was there. And they picked us up, and took us to the police headquarters.

Could you just repeat the name of that city for me, please?

Pardon?

Could you repeat the name of that city for me, please, where the French police took you?

They spoke French. I didn't know what was going on.

No, the name of the city.

The name of the city.

Strasbourg.

Oh, it was in Strasbourg?

In Strasbourg, yes. And they-- whatever was going on was in French. I had no idea what was-- and they took my mother out, and I was in a waiting hall or chamber outside. And the woman came and said, go with this-- come with me.

I didn't know what was going on anyway, and they took me to the hospital, the hospital ward for abandoned children or when parents were sick and nobody could take care of them. And it was guarded by nuns.

And I got there. I didn't know what was going on, No mother, no father, no language. I just was--

You must have been terrified.

Yes. And nothing happened. Then finally, I found another boy that spoke Alsatian, which is a sort of German dialect. And we could communicate with each other, and we decided we don't want to be there. We want-- we're going to escape.

And he knew where we could steal some bicycles, and we're going to go to Paris because I wanted to find out what happened to my mother. I had no idea what to do. And I figured I'd go to the Jewish committee in Paris.

So one night, after about two or three weeks-- one night, I had-- we wore hospital clothes. Our clothes was taken away. So we had to break into the wardrobe, steal our clothes, go back to bed because every hour on the hour the nuns had bed check, got in the bed, waited for the bed check, put on our clothes, stuffed the other stuff under the blanket, climbed out the window.

We had found a spot where we could climb up onto the stone wall, walk on top of the stone wall to a certain spot. There was a lamppost, the gas lamp, and we could shimmy down on that.

About what was the height, about 10 feet, 20 feet?

Something like that. The light was at eye level, so we could shimmy down on that. So we did. We got out there, and as we got to the lamppost, there was a policeman walking back and forth and back and forth. And we stood there-- we stood there. By that time, the hour was up for the better check, and it was getting daylight already.

So we climbed back into the window, back into bed, waited for the bed check, took-- then it was almost getting daylight, so we took our clothes back, put them back in the wardrobe, and went back to bed. And we were going to leave it for another day.

And at the end of that week, a woman from the Jewish committee came and told me my mother was sentenced to one month in prison for illegally crossing the border and that we have to go back to Germany, and she'll be free next week. So I said, for one week I'll stay here and wait it out. I'm not going to do this escape again.

After a week-- after week, I was reunited with my mother, and we had 72 hours to leave France to go back to Germany.

You were going to go back on your own or--

Well, they gave us 72 hours to go back to Germany, yes.

Oh, I see. And how old were you?

11.

You're still--

Still 11.

You're still 11?

Yes, this was in December 1938. She got out in January of '39. So instead of going back to Germany, we got on the train and went to Paris. And then Paris then we extended our stay for 72 hours, 48 hours, and we came up making-- we're trying to go to Chile, we're going try to all sorts of countries. And we have to wait for the documents and this and that and got 48 hours, 72 hours extension of our non-permit to stay. And then the war broke out, and then they couldn't send us back anymore.

And you were in Paris at the time--

We were in Paris, yes.

--when the war broke out?

Yes.

Can I-- can I ask a question?

Yeah, sure.

So how did they find out that you entered illegally?

How did they find out? We didn't have a visa in the passport.

But you came in with the woman and with the baby carriage.

--the woman and the baby carriage.

Yes.

So how did they find out that you--

Oh, in Luxembourg?

Yeah.

They raided the hotel.

Yeah, they checked documents and stuff?

They checked out whoever was in the hotel, and we got caught in the net. It wasn't intended for them to seek us.

So everything conspired against you.

Yeah.

OK, so now you're in Paris, and the war has broken out.

So now we're in Paris. The war broke out, and they couldn't send us back. And at the time, women and children had to be-- nonessential personnel had to be evacuated from Paris because they were afraid of German bombing or gas attacks. We all had to carry gas masks.

So my mother turned me over to a Jewish organization called OSE, Oeuvre de secours aux enfants. To this organization.

This is rescuing--

I can hold it for you, so you have the words.

Yes.

Do you want me hold it the other way?

OK, this is the name of this, Le Sauvetage des Enfants?

Yeah.

OK, L-E, S-A-U-V-E-T-A-G-E, D-E-S--

It's in English underneath.

OK, "Rescuing Jewish children during the Nazi occupation." I guess I'll use the English translation. My French is not that good.

OK?

OK.

So she turned me over to this. In the meantime, she stayed in Paris, and I think in June of 1940, when the Germans occupied-- when the German overran Belgium, Luxembourg, and so on, she fled from Paris south. And eventually, she wound up in some sort of camp. But that's not my story.

OK, now I was in this children's home.

And I was always handy. In Vienna, I used to fix sewing machines, and typewriters, and that kind of stuff, do electrical work, fix lamps. So when I got to this children's home, it was a chateau near Limoges in some-- called Chaban. And we got there, and they were first drawing in electric because the illumination used to be gas, gas chandeliers.

So the electrician was working there, and I was always interested in work-- in that kind of work, and I always watched workmen doing their work. And whenever he needed tools or something like this, I would pick him up before he even asked for it and hand it to him.

And one day, he got mobilized in France. It's called general mobilization. If you're born in this year, you're in. There are no ifs, ands, or buts. There's no draft board, and there's no exemptions or anything like this. You have a stiff near a stiff leg? You get a desk job, but you still get drafted.

You still get drafted.

You're drafted. You're in. So the electrician left, and his helper then took over to finish the job, and I became the helper's helper. Eventually, I was transferred from this chateau to another one, to another home of the same organization. And in-- let's see. They got the warrant for my arrest in there. I first found out when I saw it the first time. I never know.

You didn't know?

I never knew.

You didn't know.

No, that's me in the shoemaker's shop. That's the wrong one.

I'm on the bottom of the list.

And this is what? The rest document?

That's the official document where the French police is going to pick up these children.

And you're one of them.

And I'm one of them.

Excuse me.

Hello?

Hey.

Honey, I'm busy. What's up?

Where are you?

I'm doing the interview. Yes!

So you didn't even know that this existed?

OK, I will. Bye.

You didn't even know that that existed?

No.

That's amazing.

I just found out that-- I found out. And this book is coming-- is being produced now.

Oh, this is an advance copy?

Yes. Yeah, that's-- the author sent it to me.

Wow.

It's Katy Hazan?

Katy Hazan.

Katy Hazan?

All right. So where were we? Sorry.

We're invited for the 100-year celebration, which is in 2012.

Really? And where will that be? In Paris?

In Paris.

If we're still here in 2012.

Yeah. I know it's a long way off. So from there-- from there, I was arrested. I was brought to the camp of Rivesaltes in Southern France, and my father had gone to Belgium. And he was arrested in Belgium and shipped to the camp of Gurs, which is nearby also in the Pyrenees in Southern France. And he was transferred over.

And what I didn't understand when I was arrested at the children home-- I was told my mother was requested that I join her, but when I got to the camp, my father was the one. And the reason my father gave my name and address is he was told that if you have children under the age of 16, you will be let free. In order to qualify, I had to give name and address.

Oh, no.

And instead, the police came and picked me up.

Oh. So it was a ruse, basically?

And we got-- I got reunited with my father, which I haven't seen in several years. From '38 to '42 I haven't seen him. And we got onto the railroad siding to be put into the cattle cars, and at the roll call-- he was used to the camp life because he was in that camp already for four years or better.

And he answered to the roll call, and I wasn't swift enough, and I hesitated. And his-- and stayed there. And while he was going up on the board into the cattle train, he answered for me. And I didn't go on. I stayed down.

And at the end of the roll call, there were a few people left with each-- they were arranged alphabetically with some of the letters-- one or two people were left. They asked me what my name was, and for some reason, I gave a false name. I gave a different name.

They looked on the list. They didn't find me. They said, OK, back in the camp for the next transport. When I got back to the camp, a former educator from this OSE worked as a Red Cross worker, and she recognized me. And she made arrangements to smuggle me out of the camp.

How did she smuggle me out of the camp? Excuse me. The Red Cross commission would come in in the passenger car. In those days, those passenger cars-- under the rear seat, they used to keep the tools, the spare tire and all that stuff, underneath the rear seat.

So what they did-- they emptied that out. They put me in there. They put the seat on top, and then the commissioner would sit on top of it. And that's how I got out of the camp.

This is 1942?

In--

What year is this about?

Yes.

1942?

August-- September '42. See, I was picked up in August of 1942, and this was the first days of September. I was then turned over to a family in Perpignan in Southern France, and from there, a social worker from this OSE took care of me,

a pretty girl.

And we used to go-- by that time, I spoke French fluently, no-- no accent, nothing. We went to the railroad station, and when the police came with families with children, we told them here from the OSE organization, give us the children, and don't let them go into camp. Most people didn't.

A few that did-- we were about 20 or so. Then the OSE opened up a closed summer camp or rented it in the Pyrenees, in the mountains. For a few days, we were taken care of there, and eventually, I was sent back to this home that I was taken from.

Now that I went back to this home, they wouldn't want to keep me because already I was over the age, and also the police constantly raided the homes, looking for older children. The little ones they left alone, but looking for all the children. They says, you can't stay there, so I got false French papers as a Frenchman, and I joined a fascist youth organization for MarÃ©chal PÃ©tain. It's like a paramilitary organization.

There were no men around, so we used to do work, help out in the-- to collect grapes or-- I was digging up potatoes. We had to put-- carry them from the end, dig them up from the end of the field, carry them to the road. And then there was a horse and wagon. We would load them on the horse and wagon, and we went.

That was-- and every morning, we had to get up, salute the flag, and sing they hymn to MarÃ©chal PÃ©tain. Eventually, I got a job in town as a bicycle motorcycle mechanic because I was always--

--handy.

--handy, OK. And that was fine, until one day I was called into the chief's office, and they asked me, where's your mother, where's your father, and I had to invent all sorts of stories. I said, my father is dead. And where's he buried? I say, oh, what do I know? I said Pere-Lachaise because that's the only cemetery. I knew. It's the biggest cemetery in Paris, and at the time, it was in the occupied zone. So the communication was kind of slow to check it or something like this.

And where's your mother? I said, oh, my mother? I don't know. She ran off with another man, and my aunt is the one that's taking care of me. But actually, that aunt was my mother. But I was just scared to-- somehow, I felt uneasy. So--

Being questioned like that by the chief, you knew something was up?

Yeah. So on Sunday, I put my Sunday uniform on, and I got on the bus and on the train. And of course, you had to have travel permits. You could not travel from one town to another unless you had documents, papers.

You had to check in in the-- you go to the local police, and they'll give you a piece of paper. And when you get to the other end, they would stamp it, and when you come back, to give it back to them, just a routine. You have to have travel documents.

So I had no documents, so whenever I saw them come on the train to check documents, I always watched, do they come in on this end or come in on the other end? And if they came in from both sides, I went to the middle. And I waited till they checked two or three compartments, and then I walked over, saluted, big smile, and walked past them.

That was fine. I got to Nice. My mother was in Saint-Martin-VÃ©subie in the French Alps in the forced residence or assigned residence.

What is that exactly?

What happened is that in the Italian-occupied zone, the Italians would treat us like any foreigner, and any foreigner they would assign to stay in a certain village. And you had to report to the police, to the Italian authorities, in the morning and at night.

So that's why, in the documentary, it's called a pause in the Holocaust, because we were under Italian jurisdiction. And they wouldn't let the French take us. Like my aunt, for example-- she was caught on the street, walking, and what they did is they closed the block from one end to the other. And they checked the documents on whoever was under in that block, and she happened to walk on the block.

So it was like a random check?

Yes, random check. Caught her, and she went to-- about a week after I was there, she went to the same camp and was deported from there and didn't come back. Neither did my father. I found out now, years later, that, actually, the transport that my father was on, transport number 31, went straight to the gas chamber with no selections. It got to Auschwitz, and everybody was gone.

How'd you find that out?

There is a French historian by the name of Serge Klarsfeld who wrote the book, and he has all the names of all 72,000 deported from France in that book.

Wow.

I have a copy of the book here if you want to see it. Actually, that book was put out by the Quakers.

Really?

Can I see it?

Yes.

I'll get some--

Hmm?

You could get some shots.

Sure, sure.

We've got stuff all over the house.

Do you mind if I say anything?

No, you can ask. It's fine.

This is Mrs. Roman didn't want her picture taken until she gets her hair done.

OK. Yes, I can come back later and take the picture maybe.

She said she'll be back in about an hour, so I don't know how long. So then I said, oh, well, I don't know. So they said-- it's OK.

That's all right.

I won't forget it.

Yeah, and I'd rather-- I'd rather hear the-- continue with the story.

My wife knows where everything is.

I took a shot at the title in case you need it.

Good, good.

Mr. Roman, it's OK. Don't worry about it.

It's all right.

Thank you anyway.

We'll just continue on. OK.

So now you-- OK, I think you told me that you would pass by-- they were checking documents. And you said your aunt was caught in a sweep.

I got-- I got to the-- I got to Nice. I was wearing my Sunday uniform, and from Nice I took a bus.

That's another story because the bus at the time-- they had no gas, no gasoline. So they had like a furnace hanging on the side of the truck, and the driver had to get the charcoal going sometime, 2.00, 3 o'clock in the morning, so that builds up a charcoal gas and, going up to the mountains, this mountain village, Saint-Martin-VÃ©subie, on steep incline, couldn't make it.

The passengers had to go out and push the bus. One time. And I got there to this mountain village, and I guess about a month later or so the Italian capitulated in September 8, 1943.

Was this in a-- as a canal or--

Pardon?

What was the name of the village?

Saint-Martin.

Saint-Martin.

Saint-Martin-VÃ©subie. VÃ©subie is the river and-- because there's other Saint-Martin or Saint Martin in the Caribbean.

Right, OK. So I got to the village, and then I joined the rest of them to-- still had my false French papers. And on September 8, the Italian capitulated.

December 18, you said?

Pardon?

September when?

8th.

What year?

1943.

'43.

'43.

And they pulled back into Italy, so we went with them. And at first, a group they took with their trucks, and they went up. Whenever they went up the mountains, we went up by foot from Saint-Martin-V^Àsubie over-- which I found out now, the name of the mountain pass called the [FRENCH], which is 2,500 meters high.

And we got-- after three days of walking without-- we were not equipped. We just picked whatever we could, left everything standing, just took whatever we could handle in our hands and walked. And during this walk up the mountains, first of all, we weren't equipped for it.

I had-- my shoes were an old pair of shoes where the top letter was cut off and a wooden sole was put underneath. And it certainly was no--

It was very comfortable, I guess, right?

It was no equipment for mountain climbing. And we didn't have roads, or paths, or anything like this. We just went straight through the wilderness. And we came to a certain point, at a checkpoint which used to be the border, and we had to wait for an Italian soldier to take us across a minefield. And I have a picture of it.

And when we got across on the other side, then finally, we just followed the people. We had no idea where we were going. This was like a long snake, about 1,000 people that left the Saint-Martin-V^Àsubie.

And you were headed toward where?

Pardon?

You were headed to where?

Well, we were heading towards Italy.

Towards Italy, OK.

And as was said in the documentary, we didn't know whether we went in circles and went back into France or whether we-- because we just followed the others. We had no idea. People that carried our stuff-- it was too heavy. They threw it in the ravine. Some of them carried candlesticks and thing of value.

Your sentimental--

Sentimental things, just threw it away, couldn't do it. And sometimes you had to climb up on all fours. Like my uncle-- I had to pull him-- I was just the strong one-- to walk up on a mountain slope. There was all loose rock. So he walked up 5 feet, and you slipped back 3 feet, and continued on like this until he got over it.

How did you meet your uncle?

Pardon?

When-- how did you run into your uncle?

He joined us. He wasn't actually at Saint-Martin, but his wife was taken previously. And he had come over to get away from where his wife was taken from, that town. So he came to where we were, where my mother. That was his closest

relative.

So we got on the other side to-- we finally got to-- after three days and two nights out on the open. And in the mountains, it wasn't very comfortable.

It was the wintertime, right?

Yeah. No, it wasn't wintertime. It was September.

September, OK.

September. It was just changing. And we got to the village. My mother found a farmer that would let us sleep there, and the next thing we knew, we got a-- we didn't know that the Germans had occupied northern Italy, so now we had-- we were--

So you're walking into--

--in the occupied--

You're walking into occupied territory.

No. Well, we ran away from the Germans that were occupying the so-called "Italian zone," and the Germans had occupied northern Italy. So now we were in a wedge.

The Italian zone would be actually part of France, correct?

Yes.

OK, I understand.

That was part of France. And we got into the Piedmont Region in Northern Italy. We got to this town, Valdieri. If you look on the map, if you would draw a straight line between Turin and Nice in France, if you go halfway in between the two, you'll find Cuneo, the town of Cuneo, which is the provincial capital of that region.

And we got to this town. My mother arranged with this woman that we could sleep there because we were exhausted. We had no-- I think-- and a couple of days later, a manifest was put up saying that whoever has strangers has to-- they have to report to the town hall. I just got a copy of it in here.

Could you look up here? Thank you.

Here's where we're crossing. I took these pictures.

Those are your photographs?

I have then in larger-- I have better pictures.

I was just wanting to get a shot of you showing the book. Thanks.

This is written by an Italian historian. This is in Italian.

Have you ever heard of the book Italy in the Holocaust, being written by--

Susan Zuccotti?

And her partner. She's writing with someone.

He took these pictures?

Yeah, very nice.

Really? Where'd he get the camera?

Good question. Yeah. You had a camera?

I had no choice.

Mr. Roman?

Yes?

You had a camera with you or--

We had-- my mother had a camera. I had a box camera.

Wow.

And these are the only pictures that exist.

Can you stay right there?

Huh?

Just stay right there.

Those were the only pictures that exist, the ones that you took?

Yes.

Susan Zuccotti, Holocaust Odysseys.

There's another book that's--

Can you pass it?

Oh, it's not a book. It's a documentary.

In Italy, every year, they remember the Jews crossing the mountains, and they have--

The Jews of Saint-Martin-V^Ãsubie and Their Flight Through the Italy and France, Susan Zuccotti.

So we don't forget?

Yes.

And see, what happened is, in 1998 I wanted to go back to Italy to these places in the mountains, and my wife said, ah, what are you going to do there? Who's going to remember you 50 years later? All you're going to see is stones, and stones, and more stones. No, don't go.

So we compromised. We're going to go on a trip, Venice, Florence, Rome, OK. So we booked the trip, and she was-- she was in here in the kitchen doing something or other. She says, hey, look here. There's an article in the newspaper about the region where you were. I said, yeah, that's it.

And there's a telephone number of this travel agency and the Jewish committee. Why don't you call up? I says, ah, what for? Said, go ahead, call up. I call up, and I speak to a young man. And I said, my name is such and such, and I'm calling from the US. And I'd like to talk to whatever the name was there.

And he says, my father doesn't speak English. Can I help you? I says, don't worry. I speak Italian. Put him on. He comes to the phone, and we speak about five minutes. And it turns out that he was the Italian soldier that put the straw down for us.

That did what?

In the church that we were--

Oh my goodness.

[NON-ENGLISH]

That's amazing.

I had a lot of material. The picture is in here somewhere.

Well, in any case, it turns out that we compared notes of happenings that happened. Like in February, an American airplane was shot down, and that was the first American I ever saw, one of the fliers that got rescued by the partisans. That's where the first group of partisans was formed, in that church. And we were reminiscing things that are happening.

And he says, we're having a ceremony. We're going to put up a-- not a moment, a--

A statue?

Not a statue.

Memorial?

A small-- going to dedicate a plaque for the deported, and you speak. And I'd like you to come to that-- I could have given you my glasses.

OK. And this was taken where, Mr. Roman?

This is in Cuneo.

Cuneo.

Cuneo is the provincial capital of the Piedmont section of Northern Italy.

It's got to be here somewhere.

I thought I saw it before.

There's one of that in the book here, too. In this-- in this book.

He was in this church here in the mountain pass between Valdieri in the mountains between two valleys. And we stayed

up there until November.

It's the sanctuary of the Madonna del Colletto?

Yes. We stayed there until November. Then it got too cold and too windy up there, and we couldn't stay there any longer and eventually moved to the other side of the valley, where the sun was in the morning, to keep warm. And this is the other side of the valley, by the way. And that's our heating system.

What is that?

Huh?

Your heating system.

Chopping wood.

Chopping wood, OK. I have that in here. So when I knew-- actually, I was interviewed by Spielberg, and I had laid out all my pictures of my life. on the table here. And she looked at-- she looked at certain pictures, and all she wanted-- the interviewer wanted to have old pictures from before the war, which-- I had very little.

And I had these little pictures, she looked at them and said, eh, they're too small. That's nothing.

Who is that? Was that you?

Yeah. I'll get to it. [INAUDIBLE]

That's you?

What? Yes.

How old were you there?

About 18, 17.

I'm looking for one-- see, this was the size of the pictures because I had a Contax-- I still have the Contax camera. And she looked at this, says, oh, that's nothing. I can't see anything. These are the most valuable pictures that exist.

Now, what exactly is this depicting?

Pardon?

Can you tell me what-- can you describe what this depicts, please? Can you tell me what this picture is?

This picture is just a landscape. I took this picture of this bridge. And believe it or not, it was built-- blown up by one of us with a German tank on it.

Really?

And the Historical Museum in Cuneo does not have a picture of that bridge.

So this bridge used to be in Cuneo?

Yes.

And you blew it up with a tank on it?

Yes.

How'd you do that?

Wow.

No, not me.

Oh, not you.

No. This fellow here did it.

Harry Berger?

Yes. Unfortunately he just passed away.

How did he do it?

Pardon?

How did he do it?

How did he do it?

With the partisans. They--

Oh, I see.

The Italian-- the partisans were Italian soldiers, actually, because the Italian soldiers that did not return to their unit-- when they said the war is over, they all went on their own, and whoever did not report to this unit and-- was considered a deserter. So a deserter they would shoot, no ifs, ands, or buts. So they had to defend their lives, and they became partisans.

So now, according to what I've read, from Cuneo you went to Turin and Bologna?

Huh?

You went from--

Yes.

OK. And that was in about March 1944?

Yeah, well, that was after this.

Oh, it was after that? OK.

Oh, yes. Now, this is what-- so when I knew I was going to Italy, I took these little pictures. I went to Washington, took these little pictures, and showed it to them. And they were amazed that these pictures even exist. And here is the letter. They made copies of these pictures in this size.

So these photographs are in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, right?

Yes.

How many photographs would you say you took of the-- your journey? I think I have about 20 here.

And did they all go into the museum?

They're all in the museum, yes.

And that was about, what, 1998, according to the letter?

Yes. So I took these little pictures to Washington, and they made this album for me. And here's the letter that went with it. Here you see people that carried their stuff any way they could.

So this is while you were--

While we were walking.

To go to Italy?

Yes. And--

Amazing. Amazing they're in existence.

Really, yes.

Here is my uncle in the back, the last one. And you can see the superhighway we were traveling now.

I just need to change my lens.

Enclosed, please find original photographs and negatives of all the photos we duplicated from your time in Valle Stura, V-A-L-L-E, S-T-U-R-A. Your trip across the Alps-- the start of your trip across the Alps is quite compelling and your photographs a treasure. That's Lauren Apter photo archives, the United States Holocaust Museum, August 26, 1998.

[BACKGROUND CHATTER]

That's amazing.

OK, fine. [BACKGROUND NOISES]

That's Susan Zuccotti.

That's from the Holocaust Odysseys.

Right now she's writing another book about it, Righteous Priest, or Padre Benedetto, or Pere Benoit in French. Oh, yeah.

Is it OK if I take a shot of you, of your picture?

Yes. Oh, you took this one already, the woman carrying the child on her back?

No, I didn't take that one.

And the woman carrying the stuff in the sheet?

I took the one with your uncle.

At one of the reunions, the guy came up and says, that's me when I was eight years old.

Oh my goodness.

I took the one of your uncle.

And this here is my uncle. And the sign says "Attenzione Mine," "Caution Mines." We had to walk through a minefield. And an Italian soldier came as guide, and we had to walk one behind the other, no steps left or right. That's what that sign says.

Could you put your finger right by where it was by the sign?

The sign here?

Yeah.

Yes.

Thank you.

This is our hundred-star hotel.

You're out in a field on a blanket, under a tree?

Mm-hm.

Wow.

I've got a close up with it, too, the next one.

Oh, wow.

[CROSS TALK]

And no blanket, on the dirt.

That's it. I'm sitting there, I think.

Which one are you?

Yeah.

I'm sorry.

I'm there.

That's you?

Mm-hm. And next to me is my mother.

And these were the only photos that existed?

Yes. That's the hut we stayed in. See, this was way up in the mountain, away from the village. That's where the farmers kept their tools. In the winter, they didn't go up there because it's too cold, but in the summer, they went up either to cut wood or put the cows up and pasture up there. But in the winter, the tools and everything was just locked up.

So we had all the tools, the band saw, and the sledgehammers, and all this to cut up the wood. And--

What did you do for water?

We walked to a--

A well?

A mountain-- like a source.

Like spring or a stream?

Spring, yes.

And how about food?

Food? That was another story. The food-- we had to go down to the farmers at some point or other, and what we did-- this other boy and I-- that's our kitchen.

We were delegated to go down to the town. Also, we used to go to the local priest, and he would give us some money because we had no income, nothing. And eventually, it was snowing, and the snow was so high that it reached up to our waist. And at that time-- at first, I was wearing shorts.

That's you?

Yeah. I still had part of the French uniform I was wearing. And my mother got a hold of a blanket, but in Europe, you cannot have a military blanket or anything that's military because it is government property, and the civilian cannot have it. If you have government property, you go to jail for that.

So what she did-- she-- we had it tinted in town, and she made a pair of pants out of it. But there wasn't enough material to make long pants, so it became nickers.

And you got around on skis?

Pardon?

You got around on skis.

And I learned how to ski because the snow was too high. And what we did is we had to go down at nightfall and pick up the blankets that they put on the cows during the day. See, they put the cows out on the pasture in the valley.

And it was too cold for the cows. They had blankets on them. And when they came back in the barn, they took off the blankets. We went down, picked up those blankets, carried them up the mountain, used them for the night-- we had no heat-- used them for the night. And then in the morning, we had to bring them back for the cows to go back out.

And that's how we learned how to ski. I had those nickers, and I walked into the stable. They would leave a little trail of blue behind.

Wow.

Was that from-- from the dye?

From the dye, yes.

And who is that?

That's one of the girls that was up in the mountains.

How many of you were there up there?

We were about 10 in that hut.

And that's you?

Yes.

At 18, you said? 17, 18?

About 17, yes.

So how long did you stay in Cuneo?

Well, we didn't stay in Cuneo. We stayed in the mountains.

--in the mountains, sorry.

We stayed there from September '34-- '43 to February '44.

Who is that? Is that you also?

No.

Oh.

My grandchild says, oh, grandpa. Looked at this and said "grandpa." I said, no, that's my father.

Aha.

That's when he was deported in '42. The next one is my mother in Paris. That's the Sacré-Coeur. If you've ever been to Paris--

I haven't.

No, I have not.

It's one of the highlights of Montmartre. The top of Montmartre is this church. These are other articles. Also, I have here-- is that the one from Milan? Yes, the Holocaust Museum in Milan requested my pictures.

Really?

And also the Holocaust Museum in Paris because that's the only pictures that exist.

And when was this program, this UNICO program? April 19-- so it was quite a few years ago by looking at that.

Yes, yes.

Yeah. Because I went to a UNICO program maybe last month or the month before in Hillside about this.

Oh, yeah?

It's amazing.

Excuse me. Hello?

Yeah, I'd like to get a shot--

No, I'm not done yet.

You maybe [INAUDIBLE].

What? OK, thank you. Bye.

I have to change my lens. One second. One second.

Yeah. OK. So now, from your shelter in the mountains-- why did you leave that area?

In February of '44, the Germans started to come up the valley, chasing the partisans, and somehow my mother obtained false papers for me. I became a Hungarian.

OK.

Actually, what she got is a letter stating that I have to present myself at the Hungarian consulate to be inducted in the Hungarian army-- because at that time, 17-year-olds-- they were drafting everybody-- and to present myself at the Hungarian ligation in Rome.

And with that phony paper, we went on the train, and again, with our travel documents-- but as long as you showed it to the Italian-- and it was written in Hungarian with an Italian translation, so that was fine. And we got outside of Bologna, and the train stopped. The tracks were bombed.

So we walked a couple of kilometers and they found another train, which got us into Florence. And from Florence on south, they said, there's no more trains. Well, maybe there's one tomorrow, but we don't know. We're not sure. Because everything was bombed out.

So Florence-- what are we going to do? Where are we going to sit and wait for tomorrow that maybe there is a train? So we walked the streets. We got tired. We walked into a church. We sat down for a while then got out.

And 8 o'clock at night was curfew, and we did a stupid thing. We went back to the train station. And at 10 o'clock, they lock the doors. In comes a German officer with a couple of Italian soldiers, and they started looking for documents, documenti.

And there were maybe 30 or 40 people sitting there, waiting for tomorrow. Or they had no place to go because a lot of people were bombed out in certain places, and they had no place to go. So they started checking documents, papers.

And some guy they took out. I maked believe I was sleeping and peeked from under the coat-- we were covered with a coat, not no blanket-- peeked out from under to see what's happening. In a certain moment, somebody came to the door. They called out the German officer. And a few minutes later, he came back and said, where was I? And he went after us.

Oh my goodness.

He lost his place.

Huh?

He lost his place.

Yeah. So the following day, then finally there was a train. But-- so we got on the train, went south, and it went south. And we came a certain point outside of Orvieto where the train stopped. He says, oh, same thing like Bologna, but the train-- probably the tracks are bombed, and we'll walk along the track and see what-- see if there's a train further down. And we walked into Orvieto itself, and we got to the railroad station.

And we hear the siren going. We looked at the clock and says, oh, it's just 12 o'clock, mezzogiorno. And there comes a truck passing by, and he yells, [SPEAKING ITALIAN], go away, it's dangerous.

And then we saw another little truck come by, and in the meantime, the bombs started to come down. So we jumped on that truck, and the truck went up a mountain overlooking Orvieto. And we stood there were the planes were of eye level, dropping the bombs onto the railroad station where we were just a few minutes before.

And that must have hit an ammunition train and just went off for hours. And finally, we got down to look because when we jumped on the truck, whatever we had in our hands-- we just dropped everything and jumped down there and were looking for it but couldn't find it.

And they had German tanks with their trucks and the whole mess, and there was this feldgendarme or field policeman directing traffic. And he was yelling in Viennese, where do you go? Where do you go? Go this way, and-- you know.

So I walked up to him, still wearing this [INAUDIBLE] uniform, and I said to him in Viennese dialect, any transportation? I have to present myself in Rome. He says, yeah, sure, stopped the-- OK, get on there. So I got on a flatbed ammunition truck.

And on that truck were three German soldiers and three Italian girls, and I became the interpreter between the German and the-- I spoke German to them and Italian to the girls. And we got to a certain point when I said, that's as far as I go on this road. I go on the siding someplace, got off.

So then the German soldiers had to stop a truck that goes by. They would take the soldiers but not the civilians. So finally, a truck stopped, a covered truck, and he says, OK, get in the back. And so we went in the back, and I became the lookout because there was a big sign-- "Caution, low-flying aircraft," because the Allies would machine-gun or bomb the-- whatever vehicle they see, or railroad tracks, anything that's in the way.

These are the Americans, right?

Huh?

The Americans were bombing?

Yes, yes. So I stood on that truck and was the lookout. Propeller drops you could hear from a distance. And I would knock on that-- with my heel against the tailgate, and they would bang on the cab. And the driver would pull off the road, go under a tree or something like this, wait for the plane to pass, and then go back on the road.

And we got to a checkpoint, and I was to look out in the back. And they asked me, [SPEAKING GERMAN], are you all Germans? I says, of course.

In German?

Yeah. We all are Germans, of course, naturally. So we got to the outside of Rome, and there at the checkpoint they said, no military vehicle into the city. Rome is an open city. So he got off, and the girls said, we don't live too far from here. We can make it on foot.

Now, these girls were carrying contraband flour, and oil, and that kind of stuff, and that was kind of heavy. So they put the bags across the rifle. I was holding the rifle on one end and German soldiers holding on the other end, and we carried this stuff.

Now, when we got there it was after 8 o'clock at night, a curfew again, and here comes the Italian patrol. And I was the interpreter. And I says, these Germans have taken us-- they are taking these girls where they have to go and taking us. They said, OK.

Then came another patrol with a Italian officer that spoke German, and they said, nothing doing. Any soldier has to have a permit as well to stay in the city of Rome. So one of the soldiers picked up his rifle, and he pointed at the officer. And they said, we're German. We do here what we want to do. You have nothing to say.

And this Italian officer [INAUDIBLE]. He says, I'll be right back with the German patrol. And the girls said, come on, I know the side. We live here. We don't live too far. We'll take the little side roads.

And we did. We got to the girl's house, and the Germans unpacked their rations that they had. We had black bread and salami, things we hadn't had in years, and they shared their rations with us. And then to sleep, the women went in one room, and I slept with the German soldier on a field cot, the two of us in one field cot. And the following morning, they had to get off to the front, to Cassino.

How did that make you feel when you saw the salami, and the bread, and the--

Very jealous because this was something we didn't have in years, you know. So they went off to Cassino. Now what to do with us? We had to learn by heart the address where we had to go because you couldn't write it down. If you ever get caught, you compromise everybody and everything.

So we told the girls we have to go to Piazza Indipendenza. How do I get there? That was my question. Oh, I'll take you. She took us on the streetcar. She went with us. We got to the hotel.

And there was other people already-- from Saint-Martin were there already. And they all said hello, and they kept on walking. They said, well, what are you going to do? You're going to check in, or what are you going to do?

So finally, we got rid of the girl, though she was very nice. But they got rid of her, and then we found out there was no room there. And they put us in a bed and breakfast a couple of blocks away. That was fine.

And you were with your mother at the time?

Pardon?

You're with your mother still, right?

Yes. And we went to this bed and breakfast, and maybe a week, two weeks later the hotel was raided. And the people were taken away.

This is where they had no room for you.

Where they had no room for us, yes. The hotel we were in, the bed and breakfast, was raided, too, but luckily enough we had a room. We had the last room, which was behind the kitchen. Probably, it was a storage room at one time, and it had a small door. And they came in. They looked around in the kitchen, never saw the door and never got caught.

In the meantime, we understood that we had to go somewhere private. We couldn't-- it's no good to stay in a hotel or in a public place. So I befriended a girl in a rental agency, and she says, I don't have anything now, but come back in a few days. There was no telephone or anything. You had to go there physically.

So I went back there. She says, yes, I have something for you. Let's go to [PLACE NAME]. That's in the south side of Rome near Ciampino Airport. I don't know if you've heard of it or-- Cinecitta? No? OK. It's at the end of Via Appia, of the limits of Rome, the city.

And we got there, and the landlord asked for references. I said, what kind of reference can I give? So the girl said, they're from the German High Command. So the guy pulled in his tail. He says, OK, OK. So we got the apartment.

Then he found out soon enough that we were not from the German High Command, but we were OK. And we listened to Radio London, which was a capital offense.

It was illegal to listen to the radio?

Huh?

It was illegal to listen to Radio London?

Yes, the shortwave radio, yes.

So the people that you were staying with had--

The landlord, yes. The landlord had a son, and I became friendly with the son. And after a while, he knew that we were not from the German High Command but that we were rather hiding from them.

He was OK with that?

Yes. His wife was in Naples, on the Allied side, his wife and daughter. And he worked for the Ministry of Finance, so he stayed in Rome with his son and his sister. And we became good friends, and on June 4, 1944, we got liberated.

And what was that like?

Well, we had-- our room or apartment was up on the top floor, on the eighth floor, and no elevator. And we had a little terrace, and I stood on the terrace and looked down. And I saw the Germans picking up-- setting up defensive positions. But then they disappeared.

And at nightfall, Americans came in with Jeeps, and trucks, and foot soldiers. I spent the whole night through. And I said, if the Germans ever had that kind of equipment, they would have won the war.

So you say the Americans came in at night?

They came in the late evening, yes. And then the whole night we stood on the balcony looking down at the American troops coming. They walked in. There was no fighting.

How did you feel?

It's hard to describe it. It was liberation. And then I worked for a Jewish soldiers club as a handyman, and when they left I worked for the American Joint Distribution Committee.

This is all in Rome?

That's all in Rome, yes.

Where were you living at the time?

Pardon?

Where were you living? Did you have an apartment or--

Then we moved to different-- yes, moved to-- moved on our own to different apartments, and we had different places because we got an apartment of a fascist that had escaped, and we sublet the apartment. But eventually, he came back, and--

--were evicted.

We were evicted, yes. And then we went-- went in another apartment, and I don't know why we left. We wound up in Via Nazionale in the center of Rome, and I worked for the American Joint Distribution Committee as a handyman at first as a truck driver and office and then became assistant purchaser at the end.

I worked there until 1949. And actually, what happened in '45-- we had applied for American visas, and we had gotten all the necessary documents, housing, work--

Affidavits.

--affidavits, whatever papers we needed. We went to the American consulate, and we also had to pass a physical exam. My mother passed a physical exam, and the doctor said, you can't go to America. You have a contagious disease called glaucoma. Take the penicillin from a tube, and put it in your eyes, and come back in six months.

So I came back in six months. He says, no, you're not cured yet. So in the meantime, I went to all sorts of doctors, and they all said, you don't have a contagious eye disease. You have maybe conjunctivitis but also a very light case of it. I went to the pope's doctor, Galeazzi-Lisi, and he gave me penicillin massages with a glass rod, and the eye went like this. And my eyes start swelling up, full of pus. I couldn't open my eyes in the morning.

And in the meantime, I had arranged a date with one of the nurses of the doctor and with a friend of mine. So I met her in the bus, and she says, don't go back to him. He's making you blind. Galeazzi-Lisi is his named, the pope's doctor.

So I went to the polyclinic, clinic for the poor, and there I met a wonderful doctor. And the first thing he said, before you get up in the morning-- because I couldn't open my eyes. It was full of pus. He says, take my espresso machine, and turn the nozzle up, and get the steam in your eyes to clear up your-- clear up your eyes.

And then he gave me some drops to put in the eye and says, don't do anything else. Just do that. And it cleared up eventually. And now I told him what-- the procedure that I was doing. And he says, next time, before you go to the consulate, I'm going to give you nose drops. Don't put it in your nose. Put it in your eyes.

You go down-- when you go to Naples-- I had to go from Rome to Naples to the consulate-- go into a doorway some place, put those drops in, and the inside of the eyelid will be white as can be. There would be no excuse. So I did this, and I went back to the consulate.

And the receptionist knew me already, and she says to me, don't go in. He's going on vacation. Come back next week. So I came back next week, and there was no problem. I passed.

So the pope's doctor-- he was doing this on purpose to give you an infection?

I don't know what he was doing. Penicillin was the rage at the time, and he went with a glass rod and massaged it.

Inside your eye?

Yes.

So you finally came to the US--

Oh, I went to the consulate, and I had a stack like this of documents from other doctors that I have no contagious eye disease. And I put it on the counter, and I says, look, doctor, here. I have all these documents from the other doctors that I have no contagious eye disease. He took the back of his hand. He wiped it off the table and said, in this place counts what I say.

So that was my experience of coming to America. In the meantime, my mother got the visa, and it would expire. So she had to leave, so she left Italy and came to the US.

And my visa already had passed a year. I had to start the procedure all over again. But in the meantime, since I was working for the American Joint Distribution Committee, they had a transport of 1,000 people released from the camps to come to the United States out of quota, so I quickly went into camp and came with-- on a DP transport to the United States.

When was that?

In November 1949. I left Naples on the 10th of November of '49, came to the US on 21st or 22nd of November. I was drafted in the US Army in January of 1951.

Where did you live when you first came to the States?

With my mother in Washington Heights.

Oh, really?

Yes.

OK. That's where she had settled, I guess.

Pardon?

She had settled in Washington Heights?

Yes. And I was drafted in the army, and at a certain point my outfit went to Germany. But they took me out because I wasn't a citizen. And when I got a letter to go to Korea-- so I said, oh, well, I'm not a citizen, can't send me. They says, oh, no, it doesn't matter.

When it suits their purposes, it matters, right?

That's the army. I know they told us, there's a right way, the wrong way, or the army way, and I guess that was the army way. So I went to Korea.

And when I came back from Korea, I was looking for work, and I was trying to further my education, which I didn't have because from the age of 11 until then I-- I went to public school in France, graduated public school, but that was the end of my schooling.

So I tried to catch up to it, but I couldn't do it. I had to work and go to school at night. It was just-- it was too much. So I worked for some store, and my wife's brother came in there. And he said, where are you from, blah, blah, blah, and he says, I have a store in Washington Heights. Why don't you come up there?

So I worked for him, and I met my wife there and established my own store. I figured, what he can do I can do on my own.

So your store was in Washington Heights?

No, in the Bronx.

Bronx?

Yes.

Where about?

Bedford Park Boulevard. I was there for over 30 years. And I was franchised for Zenith, RCA, and I did the warranty work for Montgomery Ward. And eventually, they gave up the store, and I'm retired.

All right. When did you retire?

When did I retire?

'85?

Yes.

'85.

1985, I guess. I still dabbled a little bit here there, but that's the story.

And you have children?

I have one daughter and two grandchildren.

How old are they?

16 and 17.

17 and 18.

17 and 18.

A year passed already.

Did he tell you we took them on his trip overseas--

No. Really?

--to retrace the steps.

And you are?

I'm Charles' wife, Inge.

Inge, OK.

And two years ago, or three years ago, when he turned 80, he said, I don't want a party, but I want to show them where I was. So we flew to Nice. From Nice, we went by train to Northern Italy, where the gentleman--

To Cuneo.

--Cuneo, where the gentleman that took care of them during the war had two grandchildren the same age as ours. So we introduced--

We got them together.

--them to each other, and the gentleman's son said, when you come here or when I come to New York, you are my other parents.

Isn't that nice?

So they saw a little bit of their grandfather's life.

And what was their reaction to the trip? I mean, did they grasp--

Their reaction? Well, it was the first time they were on an airplane. It was--

First time on a plane.

--something totally different for them. And the only thing they learned is, Grandpa never talks in the States, but in France and Italy, he doesn't shut up. That's what they said.

And they really enjoyed it because they saw how the other world lives and that-- we went-- we saw a priest I think we saw with them, too, if I remember or a church. We were somewhere-- they saw that people are people. They saw the other side. And it's the best way to teach us, to show, not to give them a book.

Right. Well, what did they say after the trip? Did they show their reaction or

They were in awe.

Were they?

They didn't say much, but they didn't have to. You saw it on their faces.

Did you ever see any of the people we're with through this odyssey?

Yes. As a matter of fact, we're going to see them tomorrow.

Really?

Yes.

It's Walter Marx's 60th wedding anniversary.

Is Mr. Marx in the area?

In Long Island.

[PLACE NAME], Long Island. And in two weeks, we're going to see his Roman connection. This is a doctor that he carried on the DP boat when he was a year and a half old. They moved to Philadelphia.

Really?

And I'm his other representative because whatever he wants to know about his family-- or his mother was Italian Jew and a Polish Jew. They met in--

Yeah. He was an Italian Jew. His father was a Polish Jew.

Yeah.

That your mother arranged them to get married. One couldn't speak Jewish, and the other one couldn't speak Italian. But they had two beautiful sons.

And so, well, I carried him off the boat when we came to the US. And if he wanted to know anything about his family in Italy, he asked me.

Really? And so his family in Italy-- how did you know them? I'm sorry. I kind of missed that.

Huh?

How did his family in Italy?

John's?

I knew-- I knew-- I knew his family because his mother and his wife's-- his mother's sister worked also at the American Joint.

OK.

They sewed the army uniforms, I think, also. They did piecework.

Oh, that they did before liberation. They did the Italian army uniforms for making a living. They were sewing on the pedal sewing machines. And they got paid piecework.

Yeah. So this little boy that you came-- that you took over--

Now over 60 years old.

He's a doctor.

What's his name? He's a doctor?

Yes.

In New York and New Jersey.

And Philadelphia.

He's in Philadelphia, right?

Yes.

So in this book here, it's quite-- I'd say there is quite in there.

Yeah, but [INAUDIBLE]

No, no, that part is not in there.

I have some newspaper clippings also all over.

From what?

From the caravan of peace, from the--

You have that in the Italy book from that trip from '98. We have everything more or less in there.

I actually spoke in that square to over 2,000 people, according to the newspaper.

This was when-- when you were with Mr. Marx and Nella?

In 1998, yes.

'98, OK.

And the newspaper reprinted my speech word for word.

Really? What was your message to the people that gathered?

That I thank the people for the hospitality and the help I had gotten during those years.

Why do you think people wanted to risk their lives to help you guys? Why did they do that?

Well, I have a different opinion. Generally speaking, in France, not where the children's home were but in France in the cities, the French were looking down on people that had either an accent or didn't speak--

Foreigners.

--foreigners in general. They were called sale Ã©tranger, dirty foreigner.

Pretty much how they feel now.

Pardon?

It's pretty much how they feel now, the French. Yeah.

And if you're Jewish, you were a sale Juif, sale [FRENCH]. It was a double-whammy. When we came to Italy, the people said, povera gente, poor people. They didn't say anything about Jewish or non-Jewish. They didn't know about Jewish.

We were what they called--

[CROSS TALK]

[SPEAKING ITALIAN], people that were dispersed people. Like a lot of people-- the cities were bombed out, and they were in the countryside. And that's what we were called. There was no distinction. That was the difference.

To go on that Italian point-- I think it must have been around 2003 of 2004-- he found out who the priest was that gave him the false papers, and we, the Marxes, and [PERSONAL NAME]-- those are the Italian Jews-- had an appointment,

went to see him in the old age home to thank him. And that was an experience because-- and then we said thank you, and he answered in Italian.

He said, I just did whatever I felt I had to do from a humanistic point of view. He took no credit for it. We wanted to give him something for the church. He wouldn't take it. And finally, he squeezed the check in his hand, and he took it.

And then he did a book on Pope Paul XXIII, poetry and photographs to commemorate him, so that was also--

Yeah. Do you recall his name, the priest's name?

Yes.

Brondello.

Brondello, Padre Brondello.

Pondello with the P?

No, B-R-O-N-D-E-L-L-O. And he's in the film, too, because they worked the underground network to help. Are you looking for his book?

I got.

I hope my kids don't throw this stuff away.

Oh, I hope not.

I can't see how they would.

It was dedicated to Pope Paul, Pope John, whatever his name was. I usually [INAUDIBLE].

I think they'd have found it somewhere.

What year was it?

They didn't put a year down.

Nope, no year.

Whoops. OK, this will tell us. This is [INAUDIBLE].

2009?

No, [INAUDIBLE].

So we're looking for the date of the publication?

No, no, when we were there.

Oh, OK.

I don't remember what year it was. I think it was in 2004, or '05, or '06.

Can I take a shot?

It's beautiful. You may want to take these papers out. And if you look at the pictures yourself, each one has a little story that [INAUDIBLE]. And this is the [INAUDIBLE].

These are all poems.

Oh, here--

Yeah. So you were in the service from, what, 19--

'51 to '52.

Were you a radioman?

Yeah. Field regulator.

Field regulator. And you were actually in Korea as well, right?

Yes.

What part of Korea?

Seoul.

Seoul.

Here is the picture of [INAUDIBLE].

There you go. So Mr. Roman, you just said something about seeing is better than telling. Tell me that again about the kids.

Well--

And I was proud to be an American soldier.

We feel strongly that when you take the children and you show them, they get more of the feeling of what's going-- what was going on than just telling them a story or letting them read it. Live is better.

OK, that's good. Let's see now. All right.

You had your freedom taken away, and then you got it back. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Pardon?

Do you have any thoughts on freedom in terms of personal liberties or anything like that?

No, I don't quite understand.

That's kind of a broad question. I understand that.

You could tell them, in the service, when you was stationed in wherever he was stationed, on Sunday when you were off and you went on the bus with the Black guy.

Yeah, when I first--

And you didn't know there was prejudice.

Was I first was inducted in the army, we went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. And it so happened in the place we were double-bunked, and the guy was on top of me also his name Charlie, a Black guy. And came the weekend. He says, what do you do weekends? I said, I don't know. Let's go to town.

So the two of us went out and got on the bus, and the bus driver starts leaving. And he stops the bus, and he says, hey, you're a Black guy. Get in the back of the bus. So he got up and went in the back of the bus.

And I was sitting there by myself. I says, what the hell am I sitting by myself? And I went in the back of the bus too. He stopped again and says, hey, you better come up front. And this was in 1953.

And that was your first idea that--

Not '53.

Yes.

'51.

'51, sorry.

How did you feel about that?

I felt--

[CROSS TALK]

I didn't know there was such a thing.

That was a prejudice like he experienced [CROSS TALK].

Yeah, 15 years earlier the same thing was happening to you.

Yes. So then when we got off in Fayetteville, we walked together, and he says, we better keep apart. You don't-- the guy says, so that we don't run into any problems.

That's really a shame.

Unbelievable. After all that you went through, and then--

Yeah.

It was a learning experience.

It was what?

A learning experience.

I'm sure it was.

Especially after all the help that people gave you, and then to come here and find what you found--

The same thing is happening to the Black people.

Yeah.

Like I was segregated in school. I didn't realize that it was segregation. I just-- we had to be separated.

When you were in school, right?

Yeah. But here I didn't know there was segregation, and I found it kind of strange to see the toilets "White Only," "Black Only."

Well, in the New York area you don't have that, never had that.

Well, in New York-- in the New York area, this wasn't--

Down South, I guess.

Right, in South and North Carolina it was.

And the army was integrated at the time, too, right?

Yes. Yeah, well--

Truman did that, I believe.

He had the bunk above me, so certainly. And coming from here, it didn't-- there was no animosity. There was no-- this was the South. They're still fighting the Civil War.

This is true.

Right.

Well, any final thoughts or anything you want to say?

No, I'm glad to be where I am today, and I'm glad not to be in Europe. The world has turmoil all over, and I don't think they have ever learned anything from the previous wars. And that's the way life goes on.

OK. Thanks.