Victor Reinstein Interview 8.8.2019 – Defying Hatred Project

Stanger-Ross: In case the digital file gets lost I always record, so this is Jordan Stanger-Ross from the University of Victoria with the Defying Hatred Project. I am here with Victor Reinstein in Jamaica Plains --

Reinstein: Jamaica Plain.

Stanger-Ross: Jamaica Plain, thank you. At his home --

Reinstein: Shtibl.

Stanger-Ross: At 43 Lockstead Avenue in Jamaica Plain. Or Lockstead Street.

Reinstein: Lockstead Avenue.

Stanger-Ross: So thank you for the opportunity to have this discussion.

Reinstein: Welcome.

Stanger-Ross: It's useful sometimes to start with biography I think. You know this project is about who's been involved in Holocaust education and remembrance in Victoria and why they're involved. So to start with the who, how did your life come to your being involved in Holocaust education or remembrance in Victoria?

Reinstein: In Victoria...As I shared before we started recording, when I came to Victoria in the summer of 1982 there were many survivors in the community. Just in the Synagogue community I would think at least 20. I was always drawn to older people even before I was getting near to be one and felt a deep bond with people from Europe as well. My grandparents whom I was very close to were from Europe. It was only later -- well beyond childhood -- that I became aware of any of my own family Holocaust connections. But I grew up hearing stories of pogroms that touched me deeply and as an adult became quite drawn to the horror and the stories of the Holocaust. With all of that I was really drawn to these people and sought them out and wanted to hear their stories and really wanted to try to bring their stories out. And wanted to know what they wanted, of how they wanted their stories to come out and just to share. Many of those ways were very simple, of beautiful people that would sit with young children at our Hebrew school and share their stories in ways that really worked with young kids. And in some other ways with older kids. Always trying to balance that with the joy of being Jewish, of what it meant, and learning about these people as people. It's essential to your work and as you know, we began in those years to facilitate Holocaust remembrance events. Very simple at first. The first real public event was the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht which was the first time we had opened up a remembrance event to the wider community. And then there were others in those years that began to create the [organization] [redacted] and I worked quite a bit with the people doing that and spoke at a number of the gatherings for high school students. Would go with one survivor in particular, Willy Jacobs, oleh beshalom -- amazing person who'd been in many camps. He wanted to talk. There were others -- his wife for instance -

- who would go out of the room if the Holocaust was mentioned. Helen Jacobs. But Willy really wanted to talk and I would often travel with him to schools where he would speak. It was tremendously moving. I really was drawn deeply into the stories of the survivors. Sometimes I almost felt like they were my own I felt them so deeply. I really loved these people. And even in the time that I was there in Victoria, I buried many of them and really felt a deep deep commitment that their stories not be buried with them. I could go on and talk about different elements of the different programs and other aspects of the individuals but should pause for a moment.

Stanger-Ross: I'd love to hear more about that time, how it is that conversations started to happen about telling these stories, who was involved in those conversations.

[00:06:50]

Reinstein: Possibly my files would help in terms of just how it started. I don't think I started the telling. These were people who were there and wanted to talk. One of my early associations with the survivors was a very practical question of what to do to care for the dead. I really wanted to see a Chevra Kadisha in Victoria and to that point there had been a very small one which was pretty much a secret society and it was out of that that we created the wonderful Chevra Kadisha that still is and does so beautifully. But one of the things I realised is that many of those who cared for the dead were survivors and I was fascinated by that. Willy was one of them. He would kind of -- he was not one to be particularly reflective or philosophical, it was just "I've seen enough death" simply in the sense of it didn't bother him. I would talk with Willy and Helen, they had a very close friend, Rysia Kraskin -- beautiful, beautiful person -- maybe I'll wait cause it's a bit long and maybe you're familiar with a beautiful beautiful story about Rysia and Helen. I'll wait and we can see where it fits. But it's a story I tell here or in Boston, wherever I am on Yom HaShoah so I'll wait. But Rysia lived near us where we lived in Victoria and became very close with her and I just personally would start to ask her about herself and over time she really began to open up. Rysia, whose husband died soon before she moved to Victoria, and the Jacobs all came to Victoria and there were others too following their children. That fascinated me. THe children mostly lived further north on the island and the parents wanted to be in a Jewish community but near to their kids. Rysia had come from Europe, also from many camps, to Montreal and moved to Victoria after her husband died. Willy and Helen had lived in New York after they came to the States. There were many others. There was a woman, Esther Deegle, who had with the Chevra Kadisha in that time. So I think I felt both an obligation and a deep desire to connect with these people and just sought them out. I would have to look to see when our first Yom HaShoah program was. It was in the early -- I came in 82 -- it was probably between 82 and 85. I would have that in my files. But Willy Jacobs had led the effort to create the Holocaust memorial in the cemetery in Victoria. Soon after it was completed, again just before I came, we were talking about what to do with it. Is it just there? Then we began -- may have been 85 -- we held the first Yom HaShoah memorial there and I'm quite sure that Willy was the person that spoke at the first one. We created a whole ceremony, a ritual, that became the template for doing that each year. Willy died only a few years later and on the day of his funeral we were supposed to have gone together to a school on Saltspring Island to speak.

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Reinstein: Year after year we had the ceremony on Yom HaShoah. Early on we began to connect that with a talk by a survivor with Hebrew School children and really starting fairly young. We would always set a simple white flower in the middle of the table and a Yahrzeit candle and talk about those as remembrance and hope and try to frame it in a way that both shared the pain but also the hope. Rysia was such a loving, caring person and that just came out. And she was always hesitant to talk to children only because she didn't want to burn them. We didn't have the youngest kids as part of that. Then we would go from there from the Hebrew School and the Shul to the cemetery and those programs were, as we talked, always family, just the Jewish community. Occassionally there were others but they weren't public, unlike the Kristallnacht observance which was a very public ceremony the first time. As we began to look at how else to commemorate and mark the memories and experiences of these people right among us -- I'd have to think about the sequence of events and thoughts and who -- but we came to the thought to have a Kristallnacht public remembrance program on the 50th anniversary in 88. The Wiesenthal Centre actually provided a book that I have, a booklet, in an effort to seed remembrance programs and we used a lot of that material but developed our own program and would begin the first year and then for as long as there were enough people afterwards, survivors would light the Shammash candle and they would pass it to a young person who would then light a memorial candle, having six survivors and six young people. We had so many survivors and had to try to find ways to involve people. And at that time in the early years we had several witnesses of Kristallnacht. One of the early speakers in these Kristallnacht observances was Dr Edgar Strauss who had experienced Kristallnacht. It was always so powerful to hear him talk about it. His daughter, Dr Esther Strauss, *aleha va-shalom*, peace be upon her, was a psychology professor at UVic who died tragically young. But she had brought her father to Shul and whenever her parents would visit that's how I came to know them and expanded the circle of survivors in that way. In terms of how, it began and the churnings that opened up into the various remembrance projects, it's important to speak of Mr Jack Gardner who was really a force of nature. Remarkable person, *alav hashalom*, and I met Jack when first coming to Victoria to interview for the Rabbinic position, and he took my wife and I for lunch, he and his wife Goldie. We could say so much about Jack, *avram yaikl*, he was a survivor and very often simply introduced himself in that way: "My name is Jack Gardner, I'm a survivor."

Reinstein cries

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Reinstein: He was a remarkable remarkable man. In part because unlike many who had been through it, he knew both the personal context and he really knew the historical, social, political, and geographical context. He really knew the entire setting of the Holocaust both from within and from without. He also had one of the sharpest memories of anyone I'd ever met and bringing all that together he was a walking archive. He would talk about what was on the bakery shelves in his shtetl, he could talk about what the Shamas, the sechtsten and his Shul and the Synagogue was wearing. He knew all of their names, he would talk about them by names, I felt like they became people in my own life. [*phonetically*] Borok-shamash was the sechtsten in the synagogue. He would talk about the tensions in the Jewish communities and the different *chevdras*, the different societies in the community. He would talk about his parents preparing for Pesach, all with such rich rich flavour. And he would talk about the politics of his

town and in his Jewish community. He joined the Russian army at the outbreak of war and he was wounded and sent to the -- eventually to Siberia for treatment and to get away from the front as a wounded soldier. On a train travelling to Siberia he met his first wife and they were married three days later. This is all part of Jack's impetuous, fierce feeling for life in the midst of all of this. He lost all of his family. And he, with many steps in between, he came back to his shtetl of Stary Sambor, Poland, and he said he stood in front of the house and he waved his fist and he said he would leave and create a Matzevah. A Matzevah is a gravestone. He said he would leave and create living Matzevahs, to have children to remember. And he would leave this bloody land. He and his wife were able to leave. They were in a displaced persons camp for a time. He would tell of how an American soldier stood with a group of survivors in the DP camp and offered them a gun to go into town, which I believe was near Munich. Jack would often explain how no one would take the gun, how that wasn't the way. And his oldest son, Maurie, was born in the DP camp, I believe in Fernwald. So Jack, just in this sharing there is so much to share about Jack, but from the moment I met him -- all it took was a moment to start hearing of the Holocaust and his story and the urgency to remember and it overwhelmed me with emotion, with love, with wanting to help to do that. So I knew Jack and his second wife. His first wife died fairly young where they lived in Texas. They had really gone far far away, holding all of this, two survivors. He married his second wife, Goldie Gardner, of blessed memory, beautiful beautiful person, whose mother and sister lived in Victoria. Maybe you've heard of Bernice Packford who was very involved in the Shul for many years -- I can share more about her -- and their mother, Bernice and Goldie's mother, Hinda Shapiro, all lived in Victoria. So Jack and Goldie moved to Victoria. They'd actually lived in Victoria, Texas and moved to Victoria, British Columbia and Jack brought all of that passion and all of those stories. So many stories. He really really worked tirelessly to preserve Jewish memory, Jewish sites, Holocaust sites in Europe, carried on a years-long battle with the Ukrainian government to restore Jewish graves and to set apart mass graves, and succeeded with many of this. I have a lot of his correspondence in fact, both with EU and Israeli and Ukrainian officials. He personally sent regular packages to struggling survivors in Russia. He would somehow either contact or be contacted by children and grandchildren from survivors from his shtetl who were seeking information that he would then give just from memory, being able to tell them about their families. Just amazing correspondence with people. This is obviously a very long way around with your question about how I became involved. These people became such a dear dear part of my life and in many ways the conversations were so rich and so filled with detail, with Jack and with others, I still feel in a way that I carry their stories as my own. And sometimes I have to pinch myself or say "wait a minute," but I felt such an emotional connection with them and their stories, that they remain such a deep part of myself. I could go off into many stories but I should pause again here and see where you want to go.

Stanger-Ross: Well I saw the passionate emotion of that story and I think we should record more stories that you think should be recorded. I guess a question I have for that story about Jack -- you paint such a vivid image -- I wonder what you think the experience was for him of -- I don't know if experience is the right word or the purpose or the meaning, I'm not sure what word to attach. For him, of caring and telling those stories and the work that he did around it, where do you think that carried him?

Reinstein: Where it carried him or how it --

Stanger-Ross: I'm having a hard time phrasing the question but I mean, what was the meaning in his life of doing that?

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Reinstein: I think Jack in some ways -- and I'm interpreting here -- but I think he really was one of those survivors who struggled with why he survived. No one else did. Almost no one from his shtetl, virtually no one from his family. As soon as he started talking about this, the passion was overwhelming. You almost had to step back from him. But he, I think, felt it truly as his life's responsibility to remember and to ensure that others remembered and that the dead were honoured. He personally, the creating of as I referred to living Matzevahs, was his phrase and I'm sure it would be possible to speak with some of his children. His oldest son and daughter in law, Maurie and Tessa, still spend time in the summers in Victoria in Jack and Goldie's house. His third wife actually died just recently. But they are there and I'm sure could talk much more directly about some of the family part and they carry names of the family. They are the living Matzevahs and Jack would often talk about how these two, Maurie and Tessa, are doctors, and he would talk about the good that just his children have done for others and then he would talk about all of those who didn't survive and what good could have come into the world. I think that would be the greatest impetus in his life for this work of remembrance but he was also someone who was an ebullient personality, who truly loved life, and was filled for all of his depths of sorrow and pain that were right there, there was in equal measure joy and a desire to help people. Everyone and anyone to live good lives. To be of help in people's lives. It was so important to him to see people live with meaning. I think this is all part of the impetus.

Stanger-Ross: Did he participate in the public events locally in Victoria or the high school education initiatives?

Reinstein: He participated very much in the events in the community. I don't believe he did too much in terms of the high school events. I think in some ways he left that to those who had been in the camps. But he certainly spoke, both formally and informally. He was someone -- the context had to be shaped when Jack spoke because there was no way to contain where he went, his passion, his breadth of knowledge, where he would go was never clear. Nothing was ever written. Jack just talked, it was his life, he would open up.

Stanger-Ross: Who else's stories should we hear?

[00:33:08]

Reinstein: Maybe I should be sure. You should look at that book we spoke of, created by Rhoda Kraellis, *Keeping the Memory*. It's fifteen eye-witness accounts of Victoria Holocaust survivors. That came out of one of the Yom HaShoah gatherings where I spoke of the importance of gathering these stories and she took that quite to heart and gathered these stories. Maybe one I want to be sure we tell is the one of Rysia but I should get a prop. A prop that I take out to every Yom HaShoah, it's a very simple corner drugstore tube of lipstick. It'll become clear why, of all things, that it's a prop for talking about the Holocaust. I would start by just saying that Rysia and Helen, Rysia Krasten and Helen Jacobs, were friends whose souls were joined. Rysia married her

husband I believe before leaving Europe, as did Willy and Helen. They were all of very different temperaments. Willy was a big burly strong person that spoke little until he opened up to talk, not a deeply emotional person in the midst of all that he went through, of the talks he gave, I don't know if I ever saw him cry. He was gruff. You met him, there was this sense of a gruff person. He had grown up in Poland in -- I just said it the other day, I'm blanking for a moment on the name of his shtetl -- and Helen was, as I mentioned before, very -- she smiled, a bright sense, but did not talk a lot either. She could be quite crusty and quite judgmental. Very sharp at times. Rysia was a very gentle, joyful person. Very caring who spoke very gently. So the difference in characteristics, the ways of being between her and her dear friends was quite striking. But if anyone ever criticised Willy or Helen, Rysia *snaps fingers* was right there to defend them. I don't know if she actually said, but as much as saying "don't you dare criticise them." Even though I can imagine that some of their manner was painful to her. And that all begins in the years of the Shoah. Ah, Willy was from [*phonetically*] bell-hatuff, a shtetl called bell-hatuff. And Rysia was from Warsaw. Grew up in a family that was quite intellectual, lots of stories about her family and her son lives on Vancouver Island as do the sons of Willy and Helen. Rysia's older brother was a film maker in Poland in the 20s and 30s and actually went to the States in regard to film just before the Shoah and he came back for his family.

Reinstein cries

Reinstein: He didn't survive, none of her family survived. But a niece survived who lived in Israel and I met her niece and grand-niece who were very close to Rysia. So the story of their closeness begins in a cattle car. Rysia and Helen were I believe in five camps together. This is all documented and what they were I don't remember the sequence right now. But Helen was always the stronger one and Rysia was the weaker, more frail one. They met as teens, young women, girls, on this train. At a stop, in that terribly cynical, cruel way, a small amount of water was passed in and it was not enough for everyone to drink. Helen managed to get some and she didn't drink any. She gave whatever she could get to Rysia. They managed to be together through I believe it was five camps, possibly six. Throughout the entire Shoah. I believe it was at Ravensbruck that there was a selection. Helen realised that there was no way that Rysia was going to make it. She was very pale and quite sick. Somehow -- and I've never heard how, there's no one in the world to ask -- somehow Helen had a small piece of lipstick that she had managed to keep with her and she took that lipstick and she rubbed it over Rysia's cheeks to make her look ruddy and healthier and Rysia survived that selection. And the Holocaust. The two women then with their husbands remained close throughout their lives. They're all gone. But the tube of lipstick that I take out every Yom HaShoah becomes a symbol to me and as I share it with students through the years, with young people, it's always sharing it as a symbol of spiritual resistance, a symbol of kindness and caring, of selflessness. That in the midst of that hell, that Helen could think only of her friend and ways that she could do to save her and she did. Thus Rysia's fierce defence of her friends and Rysia lived longer than both of them. Willy died probably in the later 80s. Helen died just six weeks after Willy. It was one just before and one just after that year's Holocaust education and remembrance project at Victoria High School as we spoke of Willy, Helen got up, she would not speak about the Holocaust, but she and her sons were there. And then just a few short weeks later she died. Rysia lived till I believe around 2000, or the early 2000s, it was just after I left Victoria and in my early years back in Boston, after I would tell her and Helen's story every Yom HaShoah, I would call Rysia in Victoria and tell her

I told the story and she would be delighted. As I tell people now whenever I tell the story, I no longer need a phone to tell Rysia that I told the story.

Stanger-Ross: Rysia told you the story?

Reinstein: Yes.

Stanger-Ross: Do you remember that?

Reinstein: Her telling it?

Stanger-Ross: Yeah.

Reinstein: Yeah, yeah. I heard it many times from her, in part because I would ask her to tell me. I believe that the first time was sitting at her kitchen table. Especially after Willy died, I began to very gently encourage Rysia to tell her story and to talk. At first she was very resistant and after Helen died Rysia began to soften and eventually she was willing to talk. She early on would talk at these gatherings for the children before the Yom HaShoah program and she was just the perfect person for that because she was so, so compassionate and so concerned for the kids and what they were hearing. But after Willy and Helen died, Rysia -- I have in my files what year it was. But she agreed to be the speaker at the Yom HaShoah gathering and she wrote out -- I actually recorded, I'm pretty sure I recorded, her telling it in her kitchen, at her kitchen table, and then transcribed. So I have to look and see how much of that story she tells in the talk that she first gave, but it's just as she spoke it's transcribed. You know, prior to that we had a ritual that we developed with the very first program of laying long-stemmed flowers in the lines of [*phonetically*] amah-giyen-daveed and she would do that from the start and survivors would come up but she wouldn't talk until after her friends had died. So there's more about her and notes of her telling this and other stories.

Stanger-Ross: Do you know how she and Helen both ended up being in Victoria?

[00:48:20]

Reinstein: Yes. As I say, Rysia and her husband went to Montreal and I don't know off-hand if they had sponsors there, especially given Canadian policy during the Shoah. And again I don't recall if I knew the actual how Willy and Helen went to New York. Likely that they had sponsors there. But Rysia has one son and Willy and Helen have two sons. And the sons made their way to Vancouver Island and really wanted to live away from urban life and I think there's probably much more involved here, I'm very hesitant to speak to. But Willy and Helen I believe came first to Victoria simply to be near to their sons, relatively near, and their grandchildren. Then Rysia after their husband died similarly came to be on Vancouver Island at least in proximity to her sons.

Stanger-Ross: Had the two maintained a connection while they were in Montreal and New York?

Reinstein: Yes, they were very close. I don't know exactly the nature of it but you know, certainly.

Stanger-Ross: I want to continue along this vein, but I guess I have two curiosities which are probably a bad way to do interviews but I do a lot of bad interviewing in these anyway. One is a curiosity about that question that I asked you earlier about Jack, what his carrying of the story meant to him. So I have on curiosity to ask you what it is for you to carry these stories. So that's one question I want to ask. Then the other -- maybe this is a pause among stories because I also want to hear your recollection of Willy's stories -- but if we're going to pause among stories, I guess another curiosity I have is to try and understand what it was to be in Victoria in the 1980s and some members of the community are carrying these kinds of histories in a setting that seems far from that history in some ways. Just to try and understand that environment where those stories were being told and how people were responding and where it fit into the community or even wider life in Victoria. So a series of very different direction I'm thinking about, I don't know which one inspires you.

[00:52:06]

Reinstein: Wow. There are a lot of questions there and I'm happy to try to work with them. Maybe I'll save the personal part for after. I have wondered, and did wonder in those years, really with wonderment of how these people created lives. Victoria, British Columbia. Vancouver Island. It couldn't have been more different in so many ways from their lives before. The remarkable degree to which they rewove their lives and created lives, how their journeys before continued in their journeys there and then in Victoria. I think it's fascinating the psychological strands of that, it's way beyond my ken and my expertise. I'm sure people have done some studies that would be helpful to look at that. But the resilience was remarkable and while showing it in very different ways. I think their love was so deep, their love of life and their love of people. Again, showing it in different ways. It may be by snarling at someone over something but there was a passion and really a love for people. Jack would talk about -- he just loved human beings. And Willy, which we can tell more about him later, for all of his gruffness, was so gentle with young people and so caring. I think of just the wonderful woman, Lonya Menzer, was from Vienna. So cultured, really the epitome of the Viennese Jew, and here she was. But when you saw her, the way she dressed and the way she walked and talked, just to be in her presence, you felt like you were in a Viennese salon. They carried these worlds with them and they carried the horrors too. That was never never far away, especially for those that had survived the camps. You could jump in one moment from one world to the other. But then back, and that's what was so remarkable. So how they did that I don't know. That's where the psychologists can help. But I both wondered about that and, as I say, I was filled with wonderment with how they did it. They were inspirational for simply being able to live. It was never with a sense of judgement, like "you think you've got problems." I'd look at my life, you know, the stuff that we'd feel as stress and struggle was real. But by comparison it was nothing and there was never ever a sense from them of that. It's my own sense of, "wow," how their stories put so much in perspective.

Stanger-Ross: Where did they fit into the Jewish community more broadly at that time?

Reinstein: That's the other part. Here I want to be careful only because I'm only responding out of my own perspective and it's somewhat limited in so much that as I try to look at that question I was right within the question. I don't want to suggest that I have any definitive or full response to that. It would be worth talking to some of those that were there early on. You know, David Katz, Rick Cool, in that time and there were others. Some of them connected very deeply with the Shul. There were some of the survivors who just wanted to be among Jews. And at that time the Shul was the only Synagogue and the only Jewish organisation. The community centre was later, other Shuls and communities was all later. So if anyone wanted Jewish connection it was through the Shul, the congregation of Emmanuel. Some came to Shul regularly every week -- Willy and Helen and Rysia. Jack. Jack -- well, that's an aside -- but his place in Shul was at the back of the Shul where he would stand by the door greeting everyone who came in and he would shake hands and say "I'm Jack Gardiner, I'm from Texas" in his Yiddish accent. Then the story would open. So many were in Shul but many more were not. Had no interest in Shul. But deeply and in that very stew there were those that were not interested in Shul but deep deep Jewish roots and connections. And some for whom the Holocaust was their Jewish awakening and awareness. It was quite varied. I think there was a genuine love and respect for people, for the survivors. I don't think I ever had a sense of it's enough, we don't need to hear that. That was not the case. There was a certain Jewish blueblood that went back to earlier periods in the Jewish community in Victoria and obviously the survivors were not that group. I want to be careful. Was there some tension? I'm not sure. They were as different as could be as Jews and life experience as different as could be. I was aware of some rough edges at times of those who had been kind of the leadership and some rough edges there. Again, I want to be very careful to be respectful and fair and to acknowledge that I don't know just what that was like. Hearing and experiencing certain of their interactions I could tell something was going on, whether it be from a survivor or from one of the older pillars. But as the Shul community I think overall there was a tremendous affection and sense of gratitude for the repository of Jewish life that the survivors brought. Just the building of the Holocaust memorial had to be agreed to, it was within the cemetery. And that was fairly soon after Willy and Helen arrived in Victoria. The openness that was so total to the early remembrance gatherings, I don't recall ever encountering any objection or obstacle with the boards of the time to holding these events. So my sense is that there was great openness, that there was a certain foreignness, but then again everyone was coming from somewhere else to Victoria. This was all about the time when the Shul was restored, which is its own story and that is well documented in the archives. But when the Shul was restored, I always saw it -- and I came the summer as it was completed. The summer that the Shul was re-dedicated. I was already there when representatives from Ottawa came to designate the synagogue a national historic site and I remember that ceremony. But once the Shul was restored and it was so resplendent, I think it sparked a certain inner restoration, that people felt we can't have this Shul and not be in it. So people really came to Shul and the survivors as they came to Victoria were all there and part of this renaissance. And I think in that way their stories really became a part of the fabric of the renewed Jewish community of Victoria.

Stanger-Ross: Tell me about Willy and what story he told when you travelled together to the high schools.

[01:05:35]

Reinstein: Willy's stories were raw and he spoke with remarkable calm. At times touched with bitterness, he could be very bitter, as Helen could. He would -- I don't know if he shared this with kids -- but he grew very poor, a very poor family. And, as he would talk about it, learned to defend himself as a child encountering Antisemites in the town. And he was, again as he would put it, he was a fighter. He was big and powerful physically. Some of the stories I'm remembering, just hearing some of them that he would share with kids, but I think it was soon after being deported, given his size and strength, he was quickly put into forced labour, slave labour. He and his brother were both slave labourers in Germany and worked on the Autobahn and this is all as he recounted. I don't know where exactly this historically and sequentially works. But he would describe being a slave labourer building the Autobahn. One of the hardest things for me which I wrote about and shared with you, going to Germany for the first time, which I had never intended to do but for this experience of meeting the German consul-general -- one of the hardest things was travelling on the Autobahn. I wanted the bus to lift up, I didn't want its tires to touch the road because of Willy's stories. Willy spoke of the Autobahn as a Jewish cemetery. Here I felt that I was desecrating graves. He talked about seeing his brother collapse while working on the Autobahn and shot after collapsing. Where his body rests, where the ash was scattered in the wind, I have no idea nor did Willy. But he would tell that story. It's probably the most painful story to hear him tell, that they had been together from the time they were taken from Belchatow. Willy tells of stealing a guard's lunch once in the camp, I don't remember which camp. It was not known who had stolen it but a number of men were brutally beaten and Willy, whether it was with some sense of it being perhaps medicinal or simply because it eased the pain, he rolled in the snow afterward on his back and always felt that that's why he didn't contract an infection and die as many of the others did. He was in Auschwitz and had a number on his very burly forearm and I remember sitting in a circle with high school students in a classroom and I remember Willy raising his arm, gesturing as he spoke to the students, and the number just being there in front of these young people who listened in utter silence as Willy talked about the journeys through the camps. One of the things I remember most is that Willy, whom as I've said was a gruff gruff person, beautiful but gruff, that was his way. Clearly from childhood he was a fighter. One of the students -- I can see her, a young woman, maybe 16, 17, 18 -- said to him, "what do you want us to tell our children?" And the gruffness melted and Willy just leaned forward and he said, "tell them not to hate. Tell them not to hate." And that was his message. I would always tell the students for whatever discomfort it caused Willy, he would just sit there, and I would just tell them, "stare at this man, look at him, and take his face into your heart. Remember him because you are among the last generation that will see and hear survivors of the Holocaust. Hold his words and remember and most of all, remember what he just asked you to teach your children. Not to hate." As I said, Willy's last lesson was at his funeral when that was all that would've kept him from being in a classroom on that day. I think I have in my notes somewhere the number that was on his arm.

emotional pause

[01:14:36]

Reinstein: There are others. There are so many others with other stories. I trust in the confidence while we're recording, one person that I communicate with quite regularly today, and have felt it as an ongoing connection, is a child survivor who lives now in Vancouver, who lived in Victoria.

I think her story is in that book. Maybe worth talking to. Her name is Yanushka Jacobovitch who as a young child lived in a house where many partisans came through and it's where she survived. Many of those who were the adults in her life were killed and disappeared from morning to night. She's deeply, deeply scarred and her story has been recorded by the Vancouver Holocaust Society. But I save many of her letters -- continuing right now, today -- because of the window into a deeply scarred soul as a child survivor of the Holocaust. You could say much more. I'm not sure how much is fair to say for a recording of her. But can share more and connect you if you wish. I think that Rick and I are probably the two people that she continues to share to. She's in her eighties. I don't know in terms of whether to respond to the question about me, which I'm only vaguely remembering, or to go elsewhere wherever you want to.

Stanger-Ross: Those stories are so valuable and thank you for sharing them. If we come to more along the way that's important too. I'm curious to go back to the events themselves. I wonder if you can reconstruct for ourselves and for future listeners that first Yom HaShoah event that you were involved in. You mentioned a kind of ceremonial template emerged. Can you talk about that? Maybe we'll talk first about Yom HaShoah and then maybe Kristallnacht and give a kind of flavour for the events themselves in those years.

Reinstein: The Yom HaShoah observance began prior to the Kristallnacht observance. Maybe it's helpful to grab -- I have all of that.

speaking away from mic

Reinstein: ...a file for Jack Gardner. The eulogies that I gave have their stories. This is all on the Yom HaShoah material but in terms of your question -- is this okay?

Stanger-Ross: Yeah.

Reinstein: Mixed in are some other Holocaust files and materials other than Victoria. This was one here, in fact, model left of this. This is a photograph of the -- uh -- Yom HaShoah, April 1988. That was not the first one, I don't believe. You can see that there are many fewer graves in fact. That's the memorial and it was fairly knew.

Stanger-Ross: Yeah. This is looking from the street side to --

Reinstein: Yeah, the gate would be here. Coming in the gate and then a path. So the gate, the entrance, would be here and then it's just to the left of the path when you enter. This -- I'm sorry I can't see his face. That is Willy Jacobs right here. And that's Rick Cool with the hat, with the fedora.

Stanger-Ross: Oh wow *laughs*

Reinstein: It was at one of these Yom HaShoah gatherings that Rick Cool really took the first steps in all of what became his passionate journey of remembering. That's me -- ironically I have a beard then and now. Until just over a year ago I have not had a beard since roughly around that

time. That is Rick and Enid's son, David. Sorry, everyone's back is here. I can't quite see. That could be Rysia.

Stanger-Ross: Does this capture the scale -- I guess I'm seeing about 15-20 people -- does that capture the scale of the event?

Reinstein: I would say there are many more. This may have been just before we started. It was certainly smaller in some of the early years but there were probably often 50 or so. Rick may have a recollection of that. It's a very simply ceremony right in front of and on the memorial. These are my actual notes of things that I said. That's much later, in 95, when it had really become -- you know. These were my notes of what I talked about. The guest speaker that year was Dr Peter Gary. Have you encountered that name?

Stanger-Ross: Yeah.

Reinstein: I have his book here. He was a music professor at UVic and wrote quite a bit. Was a survivor of Bergen-Belsen. So that was 95 when it was a well-established program even just looking quickly my own remarks were quite different. This, which I think is in the program I have here, was something that I just wrote the first year that we did it to frame this ceremony of flowers.

Stanger-Ross: I'll just note -- I guess because it's not dated and I might later photograph these -- I don't think it's dated, but it's on the pink slip. I'll just note to myself here. So the pink slip is the very first Yom HaShoah talk you think?

Reinstein: I believe this is the first one. I know that I wrote it for the very first one and then used it for every one after that.

Stanger-Ross: The star of home?

Reinstein: Yeah. My various remarks, like introduction to Ani Ma'amin, I'm sure that I wrote for the first one and was used for all. My own remarks changed year to year. A lot of this, I have stuff just stuck in, so it's not from Rysia. "When does a Jew sing? When he is hungry." And then she would sing in Yiddish [*phonetically*] ven-taw-taw-yid-zeng-inee, ven-ez-hun-guk. We were always singing and we were always hungry. That's what Rysia said sitting at her kitchen table. Some of this is just rough notes of my own, just putting it together, various things. This is 57, 58, so 88. These are parts of the program already beyond the early ones, looking at who's here. Actually 57, 58 is later. Isa Millman was not there at the beginning. Rick's mum was alive, and just looking at these people -- wow. Let's see if we can get to the actual program. So these are all notes of my own just in developing it. Unfortunately this was also all before I was using a computer and so -- actually by this point and it may have been -- so this was a later one. This is 96. I think I put things in later years first and just kept adding to it.

Stanger-Ross: This looks like it was 94 and when you used it again in 96 you superimposed some --

Reinstein: Yes, correct. There was fresh copies with the correct date for people each year. But because I would often use the same notes to myself I just kept using it. But here there was always one person as the primary speaker and I have the ones from those dates but notes to myself on organising survivors and children of survivors into three groups of however many necessary to include all to form the star of hope. That's just my own choreographic notes.

Stanger-Ross: And so the star of hope was a kind of physical --

Reinstein: Yeah, it's what we formed with the flowers. We would always bring six long-stemmed -- they weren't necessarily roses, but something with long stems. Sometimes from someone's garden and then survivors and children would come together and each one laying down a flower as one line of Magen David and then the next would come and place the next line and then another one and then the other triangle until we had the star of hope formed which was always right on the base of the monument, going up the stairs and then right in front of the pillar and the plaque. We would place it there and then whoever spoke would stand right by the star.

Stanger-Ross: And would you speak the words that I saw earlier as the flowers were laid out?

Reinstein: Yes, I think the star of hope I would say just before. I probably have a choreographic note. Here's the star of hope that was later on. "Arrange three groups of survivors, three groups of children. Once they are gathered I read from the star of hope. Then, survivors place flowers into top-pointing triangle. Children of survivors form down-pointing triangle. All stand in silence then ask to read together the Kaddish of the camps and ghettos." This would've been 94. Yanushka, who I spoke of, was the speaker and that was a huge huge journey for her to be willing to speak and she always talks now about how that period was when she opened up to talk about who she is. And then the following year Rysia Kraskin and second-generation -- Michael Jacobs, one of Willy and Helen's sons.

Stanger-Ross: John is still there?

Reinstein: Yes, John Sitwell. I'm glad to know he is, I assumed he is. His parents were survivors, Edith and Henry Sitwell. And them two they're sitting in their home, it was just of another world, in the European sense. It was just amazing.

[01:31:01]

Reinstein: Then there's another card that introduces Ani Ma'amin. Some of my notes are not on cards, they're just here. "The pain of children is the most painful to behold. The hope of children the purest, most humbling, most soothing of hope." I called on -- she was a young person, one of our students, to read from Anne Frank. And then the parts are all here. Elma Lay singing Heart from Hannah Szenes and someone would be singing Ani Ma'amin, while the young person from Anne Frank is here. The Kaddish from the camps and ghettos is from Andre Schwarz-Bart. Are you familiar with that?

Stanger-Ross: We still do that, so yeah I know it from the ceremony.

Reinstein: It actually is in the incredible book of Andre Schwarz-Bart, *The Last of the Just* is where it comes from. It's at the end of the book.

Stanger-Ross: Let's see if we can find the original one. Cause here's were in the 1990s or the mid-50s.

Reinstein: I'll see if I can get back to it. This is as transcribed -- Rysia's talk. She tells of Helen giving her the water. She doesn't tell it in full but it's here. It's the water and the lipstick. It's written, it's transcribed really as she spoke. That was 96. Let me see if I can -- this was from Willy and Helen's son, a letter. I hope I have early ones and didn't just keep reusing...Oh, I know it. This was my notes in terms of talking to the children in Hebrew school with Helen about who this is. The little background that worked for them. About what it would be like to be in the cemetery seeing people cry. This is notes from my own talk at the observance in 94. This is Yanushka's talk. Then I would make notes to myself afterward about what happened beyond the script. "What went well: Jack Gardner suggested adding Partisan in the future and next time for someone to work on the Yiddish. Rick Cool at last moment asked to read a letter from a member of the Dutch Resistance who had saved Jews and wondered what else he could have done to save more." That was unplanned. Rick just came up to me and tugged on my sleeve and asked if he could read this. That was the very first time Rick really opened into the Holocaust work that he has carried so much. Michael Jacobs was there. So that's a bit later. Ah -- I guess I've got some things mixed here. This is what I told you about. Righteous among the nation ceremony, 94. This was Rick Cool. That's interesting, I don't see Hans Rollands. This may have been another one, when he spoke, whose book is there. I think it may have been -- so many, as you see, I don't throw much out. These are all my own. Who was going to read Anne Frank in 92. "One year plan to have a child of survivors speak". At the beginning there were so many survivors, we didn't think about having children. "Flowers for Magen David." "Gladiolas have nice long stems, worked well in 89."

laughing

Reinstein: This again is my own notes from what I did for my talk. This is 92. Unfortunately I'm working with -- I hope I have some that weren't my own. Jack Gardner was the primary speaker. David Katz is -- this is all...Never varied it year from year. 94 -- 93.

Stanger-Ross: Do you remember what you would say about why are we here?

[01:37:46]

Stanger-Ross: It says here -- I'm looking at 94 -- your talk says "why are we here?"

Reinstein: I would probably be reconstructing it. Whether it was at this moment -- well, this would have been the introduction. I guess it was in 91. "Yom HaShoah. We're here to remember together. Memory essential ingredient of Jewish survival. [*phonetically*] zahoor velo-tish-kach." I think I shot it earlier. I didn't have these generally fully written. "A season of remembering, remembering days is after Pesach. The counting of the owner. Tales of the Shoah continue to unfold, to touch our lives. Introductory thought for Jack and for Felix. For Jack, the witness is

obliged to speak. We are obliged to hear and to transmit the testimony." As an introduction to -- so some of these are just choreographic notes to myself to introduce speakers. Let's see if we have -- there's other cards in here with what I may have said at different times.

Stanger-Ross: Did you think at all to vary or was it more ceremonial? When I think of ceremony and the repetition that we even expect of ceremony so we don't come to Rosh Hashanah looking for a new ceremony.

Reinstein: It was very much that. It really felt as a ritual and I'm sure there are many other ways it could've been done, I've collected many from other places of many types. I'm sure others could have very much improved, you know. But I think once it started -- I think in part I felt so much emotion with it that I couldn't even think about -- you know, we varied the people as survivors became fewer. And I think it was really the survivors who set the tone.

Stanger-Ross: 88 -- the Yom HaShoah started earlier you said. So 88 was the first year of --

Reinstein: I think it was before the --

Stanger-Ross: Kristallnacht.

Reinstein: Yeah, 88 was the first year of Kristallnacht.

Stanger-Ross: But this actually goes back -- these programs may go back further.

Reinstein: I mean even if it was the same -- I think it was earlier, I hope I can confirm that -- but this would've been in April of 88 so the first Kristallnacht observance would've been that fall. Six months later. Unfortunately these are all in different order and I don't know if I have. Some of this may be in other files. This is again my notes which I've redone, sometimes just reusing an earlier one to not redo them. This is again 88. Just seeing the people -- Kurt Weiss. He's no longer living. He was still living when I left Victoria. He was a German Jew who I believe had witnessed Kristallnacht and spent the war years in Shanghai. I have a book -- it's such a fascinating piece of Jewish history, the Jewish community of Shanghai -- and I have a book, a very thick book, that he gave me about all of that. So here for myself I just put in other names so I could keep some of my notes. Some years I started over, there was no system to it. This is now, you know, could 88 have been the first year? I thought it was earlier but I believe Willy was the first speaker. No -- I'm not sure from this. This is 89. "Reflections of two survivors" so Willy and Edith. I'm sorry this isn't better organised. This was my notes -- ah -- my notes of why we were here for 87. So that may be..."memory, survival." It's just very brief notes to myself: "memory of the Shoah. Memory understanding what was destroyed of a world that is no more. Real people, real places. [*phonetically*] navar-ah-dock. Matzah to the world." There was a wonderful man in the community then. His name was Eisel Krinskey. It was a time when we had displayed some books of his grandfather who was a famous Rabbi. Rabbi Eisel he was named for -- that's a whole other story. But Eisel Krinskey again, deeply intellectual European Jews, who was from navar-ah-dock which was a place of great great learning. And so this was just to illustrate these were real places. We were standing here just after Pesach and Eisel Krinskey had once just told me that a saying in navar-ah-dock is "Matzah to the world." So that's what people were thinking

about at that time of year, just like we were. "Memory of the destruction of the temple, marked on Tisha B'Av, but the wisdom of our ancestors of that time touches the everyday life of the Jews. Seder, nature of Jewish learning, etc. So should the wisdom and ways of east European Jewry, a way of life that is no more, touch our lives today." This I believe was the first one. And in talking about that, touching our lives today, the wisdom and ways, that was what Jack really spoke to just all the time. He would just get up and talk. So that is probably the first, I'll see if we have at least what we said, I assume I must have the program from 87. I tried to collect others.

Stanger-Ross: So as we're recollecting now at least --

[01:45:58]

Reinstein: Ah -- I'm sorry. Look at this. From Eisel Krinskey. I had no idea that was here. "I'm sending you here with a copy of the 87 program of the memorial service held in Johannesburg on the Shoah. If you want the Partisan sung [*unintelligible*]." Oh boy oh boy. This was my notes for eventually what became what I said. That became the ongoing introductions. So I believe then from that it would be 87 as the first year and it's possible that I don't have -- ah, this is 87. "Consider sounding Shofar before silence."

Stanger-Ross: Did you ever sound Shofar for Yom HaShoah?

Reinstein: Um, I believe so at the end. I'm not in the moment positive. I need to see.

Stanger-Ross: How extraordinary would that be to use Shofar at different occasions?

Reinstein: It's done different times, not with the different notes, but just one blast. Actually blowing Shofar on Tisha B'Av was a gathering, this Sunday, connecting Yom HaShoah to migrants. So we're getting to 87. I'm trying clearly how to work with all the survivors that there were. Amy Kalis is Rhoda Kalis's daughter who sang. Kurt Weiss to do El Malei Rachamim. So there were people doing it, the different parts. This is out of any order cause it wasn't -- was it the first year? It's possible cause he didn't live long after coming to Victoria. Do you know the name Markus Gudwine? He's buried in the cemetery. I know I have a fully written eulogy about him. He was an amazing person. I call him "Mr Markus Gudwine who will speak in Yiddish and then Mr Jack Gardner who will translate. Yiddish, the very sound of the language is an echo of a world that is no more but that must give rise to a language of hope in whatever tongue." Markus Gudwine was from -- I'm just blanking on the place in Europe. There's a Hasidic -- it was the centre of a particular Hasidic dynasty. I'm just blanking on which one, I actually have a very deep connection in recent years to it. But he was able to flee and became a Partisan. And eventually made his way to Belgium and he was honoured by the Belgian government as a Partisan during the war. He's a really interesting person. There's a whole other realm of stories there in Belgium in the Holocaust. My wife is Belgian. I've traced a Rabbi who was deported to Auschwitz from Belgium, to the town of Markus Gudwine. That's a whole other story. But this, probably, are the notes from the original one in 87 which I have here. "Ask David to bring the flowers." That's David Katz who was deeply deeply committed to all of this. "Call Willy and Jack and Rysia." And Willy's kids, that was just to personally ask them to participate. And this

was my note that set the tone for I think all that we did, at least in those years of no outside speaker but some words from someone in the community. I'm just really feeling the way here.

Stanger-Ross: As you drafted this, was there a committee of other people involved -- was there a room of other people -- or was this you imagining how the ceremony would go?

Reinstein: In some ways I'm embarrassed because I'm someone who really believes in process, but I think it was just me. I drew on many people but I don't believe that I worked with others in shaping it. Martin is Martin Levin who moved from Victoria many years ago but was a city alderman. He was really the leader of the restoration of the synagogue, Martin Levin. So it was involving many people but as I say, part of me was embarrassed that I never --

Stanger-Ross: Well you created a wonderful thing for the community. My daughter's been asked to read Anne Frank this year at Kristallnacht.

Reinstein: Really? Really? That passage?

Stanger-Ross: I don't know what passage -- yeah.

Reinstein: It's the classic...Isn't that wonderful, what a connection. There may be something you can tell of the time period. This was clearly done on a typewriter and just cut and pasted *laughs*. Alright, so my hunch was correct. That's what I thought. That it was earlier. So it's 86.

Stanger-Ross: We're still going. We might get to 85!

Reinstein: I believe that it's 86. Now -- well...Oof, these are all my handwritten just for the program itself. Oh wow, oof. This was a piece I wrote -- I'll come back right away to that. I brought out a file on Antisemitism in Victoria and so on but this was an article that I wrote for the local, the Times Colonist, responding to someone who said the Jews should forgive. That was my own copy. So let's see, it may be that this now -- 86 -- it's interesting that it would have had Markus Gudwine as the first speaker. I remember Jack introducing me to him but clearly that's 86. So this is the cut and pasting. You can really see that -- I remember doing it all myself.

Stanger-Ross: This is the raw version *laughs*

Reinstein: Yup, just doing that all by myself. Cutting and typing and cutting and pasting.

Stanger-Ross: So as this program goes from 86 -- here you've cut and paste it, and then up to ten years later we're seeing this program has carried forward. But how much did the events change over those years? I don't mean the program, I mean the number of people who were attending, the feel of the events, the experience for you as it became more repeated over the years.

Reinstein: I'm just trying to see if by chance I've missed -- I believe that would be. These are all pages and parts and some of them I didn't even type, just my own handwriting. Let me look at this last leaf. Wow. That was someone else's talk.

Stanger-Ross: The my father and me?

Reinstein: So that's not someone from Victoria I don't think. These as I recall really were very well attended. I'm saying fifty people but it's probably around that. I don't recall ever feeling of "oh, there's no one here." It was a very emotional gathering and I think, you know, it was emotional in one way with the survivors. It became -- the emotions kind of changed as the survivors disappeared and the emotion, you know. The first one when Willy wasn't there. The others as they disappeared. So Markus Gudwine didn't live very long after he came to Victoria. But I think, again, probably good to check with others in terms of whether my memory is accurate here. My sense was of a really deeply emotional gathering. I don't ever remember a ceremony that didn't feel really powerful. There were always people that were participating. Well, I created the template that was the presence of everyone that really made it. It's interesting, in this one I didn't recall that Mr Gudwine would've been first speaker. It seems surprising to me since he was not deeply rooted in the community. Then I have my note though that he spoke in Yiddish and Jack translated and Jack would never have just translated. He would have conveyed and brought people along. It's interesting that in this one, because that changed, that there was a reflection, a prayer offered by someone not from the Jewish community. Reverend Marlow Anderson was a chaplain at UVic who in those years I was very close to, a really wonderful person.

Stanger-Ross: What denomination?

Reinstein: I don't remember. He was a general chaplain for the university. I don't remember his own denomination. I often came and spoke through him to wonderful groups at UVic. So I think because of my connection to him, you know, clearly I'd asked him to speak. But I don't think, again, unlike the Kristallnacht gatherings -- I don't think we ever had anyone else speak. This is what we did with the kids. Let's see...It's interesting, this may have been -- that's 87. So it's probably here.

Stanger-Ross: Should we pause and eat?

Reinstein: Sure.

Stanger-Ross: And then we can talk about the strategy for the rest of the visit also.

Reinstein: Okay, that sounds good.

Stanger-Ross: So I'll pause this recorder and we'll go off the record.

-- END OF PART ONE –

Victor Reinstein Interview – Part Two

Stanger-Ross: Let me start. This is Jordan Stanger-Ross and I messed up the previous one because I didn't say it was August 8th 2019. We're in Boston in Jamaica Plain at the house of Victor Reinstein and this is a recording for the Defying Hatred project and this is the second of two parts of this record for the interview today. I think I covered what I was supposed to.

Reinstein: So I think these are all the files on Kristallnacht that I have. It's interesting -- we keep speaking of Kristallnacht and since being in Germany a few years ago, the whole story I shared with you, even though it doesn't come as quickly or easily or familiar, I've really come to feel that what's said in Germany is more apt, of the Reichspogromnacht. There's nothing antiseptic...or the danger [*unintelligible*]. So these aren't in any order. Actually this file is for a particular year I think, which may not be the best place to start. Oh, this was written by David Kirk and he was the speaker that year. I mentioned David Kirk.

Stanger-Ross: This is 95?

Reinstein: Yeah. David Kirk and Bev Tansy. He was a sociologist at UVic, worked largely in adoption. Oh I see -- it was the week of Parashat Vayera so these are my own notes, as with the other. I don't know if this became something else or if -- this looks too rough to have been what I actually said. But I spoke about Vayera, the Parshah, and noted -- I must've looked up the date. The Parshah of Kristallnacht which I believe was Vayera, which is chilling. That's Abraham's argument with God. -- and noted that the portion that would've been read in the destroyed synagogues of Germany and Austria.

Stanger-Ross: Abraham's argument about [*phonetically*] ee-trech?

Reinstein: No. About "what if there were innocent people in Sodom and Gomorrah? Will the judge of all the earth destroy the innocent with the wicked?" So Abraham argues on behalf of others, an extreme example of the concern for others. The others are violent and cruel people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Stanger-Ross: And so were you thinking there of a kind of empathy for members of German society?

Reinstein: I don't know if I was at a point yet where I would have thought that. I think it was looking at -- I'd have to look at what I was getting at. But I can see where I was going in part with it, in that Parshah there's a question, the phrase is used of people [*phonetically*] betoch-hat-year, within the city. And the question is raised in commentary as "were there righteous people or people that were righteous in their houses but not betoch-hat-year in the city."

[00:04:32]

Reinstein: So the connection there would -- again, I don't remember just how or what I said. But it would be that -- of the Germans -- they may have been decent people at home. But no one did anything. Betoch-hat-year in the midst of the city. But anyway, those are just rough notes. This

was probably the last one that I was at, in 97. It's possible that I wasn't there in the fall. 97/98 was my last year in Victoria so I'm assuming I was there. This was after I left. What's the date here? This was after I left -- well, jheez, that's weird. 97. I was on sabbatical 96/97. 97/98. I'm just not remembering. I don't remember. These are not the early -- that's weird. I think I should probably start with the older ones.

Stanger-Ross: Is that yours?

Reinstein: Is that what? I'm not sure why that's here. I shouldn't -- I'm not sure what that is. Things seem to be a bit out of order. But this is not the beginning at all. So these are what were used as kids, kids were given candles by survivors and then this was said so I think that's Leah Dragashin. "This is the flame of memory for the Jews of Berlin. Handed the candle by an elder and then lighting the candle." This doesn't look right. I've had a hard time cause I've been working with --. And then "This is the flame of memory for the Jews of Cologne" and so on. That's my daughter.

Stanger-Ross: Wow.

Reinstein: "This is the flame of memory for the Jews of Paris." That would've been Yanushka who I told you about. [*unintelligible*]. I can see I must have been trying to make personal connections because Staryi Sambir was Jack Gardner's Shtetl. [*unintelligible*] ...Leah's son.

[00:09:12]

Stanger-Ross: Just got a job as a doctor in Colorado I think.

Reinstein: Really? Wow. That's amazing. Phew. So we can come back. This is similar to the Yom HaShoah things. I tended to use the same template year after year, so this is what I wrote. I see what it is that that letter was about. It was the week of [*phonetically*] itzel-krabimoos murdered. So this was seven years after we began.

long pause

Stanger-Ross: Here we're just looking over your opening remarks.

Reinstein: We can look at this. It would be interesting to see how that parallels -- let's see, this is 94.

Stanger-Ross: uh, 97.

Reinstein: This was the source book from the Wiesenthal centre that really inspired or -- I don't know if the idea came to do it in Victoria, but there was an effort to get Foster observance on the 50th anniversary and this was the source book. That's David Kirk. So this is again -- that's my own notes -- showing where the elders -- I think this may be in the actual program -- but showing where the elders. So this is 88. That would be the first year. These are the people who -- it's amazing that there were enough survivors right from Germany right at that time to do all six.

Kurt Weiss is the man I mentioned who was in Shanghai. Henry Newman from Breslow. Esther Dego I'd mentioned, Vienna. Lonya Menzer I mentioned also Vienna. Ursula Garnett, Berlin. Helen Alexander, she was really part of the old guard at that time. These are all --

Stanger-Ross: I guess I'm curious again: would your memory be that when you did that again, this was you imagining a ceremony? Or was there any formal committee that had been established? Or informal committee?

Reinstein: I don't think there was. Again, I say it with some embarrassment, but I don't believe there was any committee. So this looks like this one, 1995. I don't think there was a program like this. I think this was all my own notes. Esther Strauss. As I mentioned, she was the psychology professor. My wife actually knew her and her father was a witness who often spoke.

Stanger-Ross: A witness of Kristallnacht?

Reinstein: Yeah. He had experienced Kristallnacht. This is that original booklet then that was from the Wiesenthal Centre that was an important source book at the time.

Stanger-Ross: Did these first ones -- where did we see your notes from the first one?

Reinstein: I'm not sure we've seen the notes yet from the first of the Kristallnacht. Did you mean this?

Stanger-Ross: Didn't we just see your handwritten notes from the first of Kristallnacht?

Reinstein: Oh, I don't think it was the first one.

Stanger-Ross: From 88. Was it in that other file?

Reinstein: Oh, maybe it was.

Stanger-Ross: Was that in this file or the other?

Reinstein: I think maybe in this one.

Stanger-Ross: Have we looked through this? What's this here? No.

Reinstein: I know what year. We did just see something.

Stanger-Ross: Didn't we just -- did we go through a different file? This was the file we started with and then you opened a second file.

[00:14:59]

Reinstein: Was it in here?

Stanger-Ross: In any event, if I look here.

Reinstein: We'll find it. This was not the first.

Stanger-Ross: No this is 95 right?

Reinstein: Oh, this was an amazing story. Wow. Somebody who just showed up in Victoria as an Israeli. Almost no Jewish knowledge and his whole story poured out and I asked him to just share it.

Stanger-Ross: His story is for two grandfathers?

Reinstein: Yeah. So he was the speaker, whatever year this was.

Stanger-Ross: What I was going to ask is that when I look here to 97, I see "Kristallnacht Interfaith Commemoration." Was there an interfaith dimension in 88 or was it --

Reinstein: I don't think...You know, there was a proclamation all the way back.

Stanger-Ross: And this was held in the sanctuary?

Reinstein: Yeah. This is interesting, this is my writing. So I think I wrote the Civic Proclamation and gave it to the mayor and then this was created.

Stanger-Ross: So this is a resolution that the city passed?

Reinstein: Yeah. That all goes -- I think there's a clip there.

Stanger-Ross: "Kristallnacht days in the city of Victoria." So as an official civic day remembering the event?

Reinstein: Yeah.

Stanger-Ross: Ah.

Reinstein: I don't even remember this. This was also -- I don't remember that the city wrote. That was an op-ed that I wrote, on the 56th anniversary.

Stanger-Ross: So this one in contrast to the Yom HaShoah was very publicly oriented with these op-eds and the civic proclamation.

Reinstein: Yeah.

Stanger-Ross: So what was the thinking behind creating a public -- what were you imagining?

Reinstein: I think that is -- let me just see. It says it, the Kristallnacht article. Somewhere -- you're right, we did see -- we'll keep looking for it. I think the reason for the difference in thinking is that because Kristallnacht happened betoch-hat-year, right within the city, with people gathered all around. Neighbours who didn't say anything. Well we could extend that to the whole Shoah. It was so striking at the beginning with neighbours being silent, and that it was done with the assent of local governments, that it seemed meaningful and important to bring in local government and interfaith leaders precisely to do the opposite, to work and show that we stand together.

Stanger-Ross: And was there immediately a fair bit of engagement by civic leaders or did that take time to build?

Reinstein: People were pretty responsive as I remember. If once I find one of the early ones -- I mean we could look through any of the programs, but the early ones could show whether there was involvement. These again are just my own notes, but here these are not all. This may have been a later one because the very first one, they were all from Germany and Austria. You know, I do remember it now, I'd forgotten all about it. These are my notes of the Kristallnacht observance at the cathedral. I do remember.

Stanger-Ross: And what year is that? This Fairfield United Church in 97.

Reinstein: I think that's it.

Stanger-Ross: So one year it wasn't at the synagogue?

Reinstein: That's what I -- I almost can't imagine that we would have not done it. And I'm sorry, I'm feeling very fuzzy on that without doing some. Ah, Saint Andrew's Cathedral so that's not it.

Stanger-Ross: This one says Fairfield.

Reinstein: Yeah, we were doing it at Saint Andrew's and Phyllis Senese was involved with it. That's all, I've said it I think. Here's my notes again. "Kristallnacht observance in 95 was too long. The addition of music was beautiful. Primary delay was with the witness testimony. Edgar Strauss must be brief and to the point and personal. He rambled, could not hear well. Review general history. The addition of Cert Walters added time." *laughs* That's pretty basic stuff. Hopefully we can find early -- alright so I guess that I made these cards each year. Boy, remembering these people. 95...And this too became pretty much a template. Oh, Irving Ebellow was with us this year. Do you know who he --

Stanger-Ross: Mhm.

Reinstein: Oh, a member of the legislature, Gretchen Bruin.

Stanger-Ross: This is 94.

Reinstein: Yeah, that's 94. What I don't know is if people had something in their hands.

Stanger-Ross: Does it say whether Bellow was invited? Was this because you were inviting an external speaker?

Reinstein: Yeah.

Stanger-Ross: And then he gave a keynote perhaps?

Reinstein: Now what I'm wondering: there was something he was invited for and had to cancel at the last minute due to a funeral. Was it this? I don't know.

[00:23:09]

Reinstein: This is 93. You can see my way of placing -- do you want to keep that out?

Stanger-Ross: No.

Reinstein: You're welcome to, I just didn't --

Stanger-Ross: Oh sorry, I just...

Reinstein: That's it's own file and this is -- here too you can start to see something of time since I'm tyoing it on a typewriter here. So this is general material that was probably coming from that book. This is now just material going into developing -- is this helpful?

Stanger-Ross: Yeah, sure. I mean -- yeah. Who's this David in 95?

Reinstein: That would be David Katz. That's me. Phyllis -- is it Senese?

Stanger-Ross: I say Senese.

Reinstein: Senese, that's probably right. Bishop Remi, Remi Deroux, was a very close friend. He was a wonderful person, I'm sure he's still around. We don't have to take all of this. Bob Prowl is in Vancouver. Let's see where we're getting to the beginning.

Stanger-Ross: So 94. 93, yeah.

Reinstein: I guess -- were these given to people? No, this wasn't. I wonder...no, this wasn't ours. So this is my letter to Mayor Cross asking -- that's 1994.

Stanger-Ross: You have another file on Antisemitism that you have upstairs. Was it your sense when you were writing the mayor, were you concerned about Antisemitism in Victoria at that time?

Reinstein: It was certainly a concern in the general climate with the -- I can't remember the other names right now...Here, so "it conveys with unique urgency the responsibility of good people to speak out and act before racism begins its cancerous spread. With the rise of racism and of

Holocaust denial in many places including our own community. Kristallnacht." I think it was certainly there. So this was not the first time doing it -- actually you can see it was a different mayor. Why -- I'm sorry -- I can't find the earliest one. I thought he was a wonderful person.

Stanger-Ross: Lonwood?

Reinstein: Yeah, he tragically contracted a virus in his heart. He was so supportive of all of this. So again these are different people and others from the Bahai community.

Stanger-Ross: A letter of support in 93.

Reinstein: Yeah. Salvation Army. 92. So I think these sheets were never printed as something for --

Stanger-Ross: For distribution.

Reinstein: Yeah. As on Yom HaShoah, the sheets we saw were. So this is 92 and it's still at that point all people from Germany and Austria. I think I did essentially the same closing each year and we can read that another time. I can remember -- I don't know if this was an idea that was out there or on my own -- "as we leave this gathering and go to our homes, the lights of the synagogue shall be kept burning throughout the night as a symbol of hope. So may peoples and nations set alight beacons of hope to guide each other. May the only fires that burn in the autumn's air may be fires to gather and feel warmed by each other's presence. May the only fire in synagogue, church, and mosque and every other place..." So that was 92. Now why am I not seeing it coming -- hopefully it's here. Harry Deshwager was a very prominent restaurateur in Victoria at this time.

Stanger-Ross: Jewish also?

Reinstein: No, Dutch. But deeply deeply connected to the Jewish community. So that's 1990.

Stanger-Ross: Richard Watz writing about leaving the lights on, yeah.

Reinstein: Yeah.

[00:31:45]

Reinstein: Yeah, David Irving. This is getting US-wide participants. All these people are gone. That's just notes. So this is --

Stanger-Ross: 1990.

Reinstein: 1990. Esther was the secretary who is in very poor health but still living in Victoria. Esther Bernstein. That's 1990. Where would the earliest one be? Maybe this was shared with people. Just as this much.

Stanger-Ross: A fact sheet? For the 1990 service.

Reinstein: Yeah. Someone must have had that idea. I'm disturbed not to have --

Stanger-Ross: Well, the strange thing is that we're looking at it right? Because we saw that in 88 they were all from --

Reinstein: We did see that.

Stanger-Ross: We did didn't we. So is that file there?

Reinstein: Maybe.

Stanger-Ross: This one is 95. It must be that file, that third.

Reinstein: It's not that...

Stanger-Ross: Yeah, I think it is this file. It's a handwritten -- cause we did look at this, "what would you have done."

Reinstein: So the articles are older. Now this may all be about the article so I'm not sure it is this. Yeah, this entire file is about the article. That's the proclamation. This is weird. That's 95.

Stanger-Ross: Oh, is it that handwritten one at the back there?

Reinstein: I don't think so. No, that was notes for -- It's here somewhere.

Stanger-Ross: Maybe it's worthwhile to -- is that it? Was it not where we saw Ayel's card?

Reinstein: It's not that, it's not that, it may be -- um, 95.

Stanger-Ross: You know what, we'll find it and then we can...

Reinstein: Alright. Let me just see...So, I mean, there is so much stuff, some of it's repetitive. This is all later than the beginning. That's 94. Boy. 93. 94. Proclamation. I'm sorry. 92. I've already been through this.

Stanger-Ross: Yeah, we've already been through this file I think after.

Reinstein: How is that possible? That's the article. Well...

Stanger-Ross: I think it'll turn up. We'll digitize it and then it'll turn up.

Reinstein: Alright.

[00:38:26]

Stanger-Ross: Why don't we take a little bit of time to reflect. Cause there's a couple other broader reflections that I want to explore a little bit in the time we have.

Reinstein: I'm sorry -- I'm just feeling...

Stanger-Ross: No, not at all.

Reinstein: Do you want to just stay right here?

Stanger-Ross: I think so, yeah. You're becoming a historian, searching through the archive for a single piece. This is what we do.

laughing

Reinstein: I'm sorry for that distraction. I thought we would walk through it and talk about people and so on.

Stanger-Ross: Yeah, we should. Should we do that with the one from 1990 that we do have?

Reinstein: Yeah we could do that. I mean, that's just the article. Unless it got mixed up in here.

Stanger-Ross: Alright, we'll spend a little more time in this archive finding the paper that we saw. Let's see. This is not it. I think it was very close to when we saw those green cards of which Ayel was one of the -- it's not in here surely. Here it is.

Reinstein: Oh, you found it.

Stanger-Ross: It was inside this book rather than inside a file.

Reinstein: Oh, it was in this.

Stanger-Ross: It was inside the book from the Wiesenthal Centre.

Reinstein: Alright. So what's interesting then, unless I have it somewhere else, these are my notes. What I'm wondering then -- I spent all this time thinking there would be an actual printed program of it but I haven't seen one from 1988. It's possible that this was the whole, all there was, and that I worked -- but I'm sure there was written material with all this information. So somewhere there likely is one of these. This was 93...94. I mean, that's one that can be looked at. Oops, this was 95 with the green cards. Somewhere in here was one that was early but I don't see it now. Here's 1990 also a handwritten one. Alright, I'm not sure -- I'm sorry -- I've kind of thrown it off a bit. Is it helpful to look at any of this?

Stanger-Ross: Yeah, so I think if we look for example at this one from 1990, it has a fair bit of detail. If we look through that and talk about the event. Give us a feel for those early events.

Reinstein: This was 94. Alright. This was 93. So, what would be helpful?

Stanger-Ross: I guess just similar to the Yom HaShoah events, if you can give us a sense of what it was like in the room on those days.

Reinstein: You know, maybe at the very beginning it wasn't as full as it came to be. I think in recent years it sounds like it's grown to just a huge number. As it got going it was a lot of people cause we did invite the non-Jewish community as well. It was really a deep deep feeling that just filled the room and in the early years, as we've noted, the candles were lit at the very beginning and that was really really moving. All of the survivors, as we've noted, and you can see here in 1990, are all from Germany and Austria. In the early years there was -- several years -- when there were speakers who had witnessed Kristallnacht. Over the years that started to fade. This is 94 and it was very meaningful to add other survivors but at this point we can see that there are other places. I'm not sure that that second generation of speakers -- so this is talking about 56 years ago and introducing the proclamation signed by the mayor. This was the acknowledging, in this Jewish sanctuary tonight there are people of many faiths and of that connection we spoke of that noting here that on that night people -- good people -- stood by and witnessed their neighbours' homes and so on. So it's really making the connection of why it's an interfaith event.

Stanger-Ross: What sense do you have of the impact of these events?

[00:46:35]

Reinstein: I think there were ripples that just kept going out. I think that people, you know, even seeing the letters that I'd forgotten about from the Bahai community for instance and from others, I think that it created an awareness of each other. And there were other things too that were happening of an interfaith nature. But I think that the Kristallnacht gatherings really did help to bring communities together and a sense of all of us being there together. Again, there were many other ways that the Jewish community was known and many other things that were happening that fostered relationships, but I think that this was one.

Stanger-Ross: Were there times that you got a sense of that connection in relation to issues that seemed to matter to you and to the community? Was there a shift for example in the relation to Antisemitism with regards to the wider city?

Reinstein: I'm not recalling specific instances. I feel that it certainly was possible to turn to the interfaith community and to the city government for support. I remember, you know, a very simple instance of my daughter was very upset that there were Christmas lights set right in front of the synagogue on the lamppost and she wrote to the mayor. The mayor responded and they removed them! In terms of all the stuff with hate speech and Holocaust denial, I think there was a real shared concern about that. And then there were other ways that people worked together. I did a lot of general interfaith work in regard to peace work and so on that was, you know -- I think people connected all of that. "We're together here, we're together in Kristallnacht observance." It felt like all part of a whole. I don't recall an incident of the sort that you describe more recently of Antisemitic graffiti and desecration of graves and so on with the community coming together. I don't recall any kind of incident of that sort. There may have been one actually on the doors of the synagogue. But I think these events were really a very meaningful way that communities came together. Maybe we'll pull back a little to that third topic that I

mentioned. I did a little bit of biographical, not as much as we might. I'm not sure that we put into the oral history that you were the Rabbi of the congregation from --

Reinstein: 82 to 98.

Stanger-Ross: 82 to 98. But you did talk on the record about arriving at that moment after the rededication and so on.

Reinstein: Right.

Stanger-Ross: But I want to make sure that in the interview we talk a little bit about the kind of ideas behind this kind of work. So I guess, you know, there are a lot of ways into that topic. But what for you is good Holocaust remembrance? Or what was good about Holocaust remembrance that you contributed to in Victoria.

Reinstein: I want to be clear that I'm not a Holocaust educator. I don't want to presume to suggest what is good in an authoritative way and it was probably in those years that I did more direct work in regard to remembrance programs than I have since. I speak about the Holocaust quite a bit. I've done some work since with our kids here in our synagogue in Boston, as a school Rabbi in a Jewish day school I certainly did. But I think what has always been important to me, or an element -- I guess I'd frame it maybe differently. I think it's really important to be aware of the Holocaust. Both by way of honouring memory but by acknowledging and integrating a terrible terrible part of our story, into the full story, and learning from that, feeling the pain, and responding to it both in terms of ensuring -- of continuing Jewish life but learning from our own story, how we need to respond to others and what that obligation is too. Maybe I'll come back to that, cause I want to really be sure and explain something that I perhaps suggested which I didn't mean to -- which is I think we do have an obligation to remember but that never can be enough as the reason to be Jewish. And in terms of Holocaust education I would never suggest to children or to anyone that because of the Holocaust we have an obligation to be Jewish. I think we have an obligation to remember because we are Jews, but being Jewish is far more than the pain and that needs to be clear. Being Jewish is a way of affirming life, of celebrating life, of weaving values that affirm life and human dignity into all facets of life. Being Jewish is a way that we create continuity through all of the stages of our own lives. Being Jewish is a way of finding and drawing from depths and wellsprings of meaning about why we're here, what and who we are as human beings. Being Jewish is a way of learning how to live in relation to other people and to honour God's image in everyone that we encounter. A way of responding to pain that still affirms life. Being Jewish is a way of finding guidance in all facets of life and there have been -- in the telling of our whole story, we tell of the pain too. And because we're Jews we bring along with us our ancestors, and we bring along their pain, and we learn to hold that pain and to draw from it, to honour it, and in all of those ways that we spoke of, of honouring all human beings. It's remembering our pain that helps us to be more human and that goes hand in hand with honouring memories and keeping memories alive. It's both because that is what we do, we put markers on loved ones graves, we say Kaddish on their Yahrzeit, we do Tzedakah in their memory and do good in their world. But it's also true for all of those of our people that have no graves, that became dust on the wind, we hold their memories, the named and the nameless. And there are times when we need to go

deeply into the pain and to feel it because it's who we are, it's not just our ancestors, it's the psychic scars, the psychic wounds are our own and we need to go there. That's why with Tisha B'Av this coming Sunday we weep as we chant the mournful sounds of Eicha, of lamentations, and that happened -- you know -- the destruction of the temples as millennia ago. The Holocaust is recent and so of other times of pain. I feel the pogroms of the stories that I grew up with. We hold those but that's because they too are part of who we are. We don't stay there every day. We give space to that. But that's not why we're Jewish. We remember and carry them because we are Jews. And I think we need to do both. We can work in the world for justice and peace as people do, from all different traditions. We all bring the underpinnings of who we are to our work in the world. We bring who we are as Jews and the imperatives that come of that, and there's, you know -- in the States in particular -- there's tension in the Jewish community over whether it's fair to call the camps where migrants are held "concentration camps" and to use Holocaust metaphors. I personally think it's what we're called to do. We speak to horrors today based on our own experience of horror. The Torah itself does that in telling us not to oppress or harm the stranger. It says 36 times, "because you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The Torah itself draws on our own experience of suffering and commanding that we treat with decency the stranger. All of this comes together and I think in terms of children, with your question. I work with this balancing regularly all the time with our own kids here -- is that they have to see us speaking about all of this. Not only about the Holocaust or specifically Jewish concerns. They have to see us speaking about seeking justice for migrants. They have to see us speaking about Israel and in the same conversation talking about Palestinians and justice. They have to see us as being true to the deepest deepest teachings of Torah and our story, our history. And if they only hear us speak about the Holocaust, for one thing it stunts their Jewishness, because it roots it only in pain, but it also separates us from the pain of others. We have to be able to hold all of that. That to me becomes essential to working with kids.

Stanger-Ross: Do you think that kind of working, say drawing in the histories of other people and other histories of injustice and violence and harm -- do you think involving that kind of work belongs in an event like a Kristallnacht event or Yom HaShoah event or do you think those events should be reserved more for meditation on this particular question and those other issues addressed elsewhere?

[01:02:25]

Reinstein: I think it's a critically important question and I think there's a really important tension there. I don't think we can answer that lightly. I think there are times to only remember when we mourn, you know -- a funeral for our own loved ones, we're focused on them. At a Yahrzeit, for our own loved ones. That's who we focus on and there are times for that. I feel it particularly for Yom HaShoah, that there are times to just go into our own pain and be there. I think it is also important though, even in those times, particularly with Kristallnacht, that while I don't think it's necessary to create an entire program that weaves together, because then I think we do lose why we're talking about Kristallnacht at a program on November 9th or 10th. But I think it's very important that there be acknowledgment of what the lesson is of Kristallnacht beyond ourselves, that central to that lesson is what happens when people step aside in the face of hate and brutality and racism. That needs to be brought out and I think that certainly should be mentioned in that acknowledgment, of where we should be standing today and reminding people not to step back,

not to become as the Germans and Austrians of that night. And then I would just add -- but then at other times, other than these moments of Jewish gathering and memory, I think we should often, in urging Jews to come out and respond to the needs of others, I think then we surely remind of our own history and our own story.

Stanger-Ross: Relatedly, and you touched on this a little bit, you were talking about concentration camps and migrants. What is your feeling about language specific to the Holocaust or the use of term genocide. Do you reserve any language for that experience that you would be reluctant to see extended to other experiences?

Reinstein: Here too, very hard and fraught questions. I think genocide needs to be used very sparingly. It's not only about the Holocaust but we need to be very careful and use it when it's important to bring home, as with the Rohingya today. I'm very disturbed when genocide is used in regard to Israel and Palestinians. I'm extremely -- *sighs deeply* -- I feel despair and horror with the continuing occupation and am horrified by Israeli policy and what it has done to the Jewish soul, but I would never use the word genocide. But yet, would take it among ourselves and warn -- draw a warning -- of what happens if change doesn't come? What happens if Palestinians are so oppressed that Palestinian culture dies? Where is the line? So I'm very wary for instance of that use but also wary of avoiding confronting our own culpability. I think I would be very wary of using the word Holocaust in any other context. But where direct pain is being inflicted on people, and here I would come to the migrants, I think here we really have to look at what is happening. Where is the danger of saying, "well this isn't so bad because it's not exactly like..." and at what point do we lose our own moral grounding then when we see such brutality as is happening on the border. There's, you know, the term concentration camp in fact predates the Holocaust. It's obviously not a death camp, there's not a machinery of death, but I think when such horror is being committed in this country and by the American government and its policies, if we truly take to heart the deepest lessons of the Holocaust, this is a point where we have to be willing to use the language in part as a way of bringing home the horror. Unlike using genocide too freely, I think it's here, speaking of concentration camps -- people are being concentrated into camps and being brutalised. Then it helps to wake us up to how we have to respond and so there I winced at first when I heard the concentration camp applied, but then I felt -- I mentioned I was there in El Paso in the spring -- and it's horrifying. I think that we have to use the language of our own suffering to ensure that we respond fully as human beings who are Jews, to the suffering of others.

Stanger-Ross: Another question I had, and you brought this out a little in that answer, is around Israel and Holocaust remembrance. What role do you see for thinking about the state of Israel in the context of an event like this? Or invoking, for instance, the singing of Hatikvah -- I can't remember on the programs of early Kristallnacht whether that was a practice -- but is there a role for Jewish nationalism or Zionism at a Kristallnacht event or a Yom HaShoah event?

[01:10:57]

Reinstein: It's a very interesting, this too, question that fills me with pain in many ways. I mean you can see that many of these early ceremonies the Hatikvah is very much a part of it. I tend to separate Hatikvah in fact from Zionism too, but as an expression of hope, and I felt very

emotional in the use of it, in the singing of Hatikvah in these gatherings. I know how much it meant to some of the survivors particularly. My feelings, I think, have changed somewhat there. I think that Israel plays a very important role in Holocaust remembrance and in Jewish life. But I think that Israel has so lost its way that I think there is a danger in bringing Israel too much into ceremonies today and it breaks my heart to say it, but I think that that is a reality and for young people particularly who are deeply involved in pursuing justice. I think it creates such a disconnect that we lose both the talking about Israel and the remembering of the Holocaust. I personally eschew nationalism. That's a much larger discussion perhaps than for the moment, but with the deep connection to Israel -- but I'm wary of creating too much of a connection today with Israel and Holocaust remembrance. *emotional pause* There's a lot more to explore there, it's very hard to talk about all of that. And there's the, you know, the questions of adults, kids particularly, visiting camps. What does it mean. I find it extremely meaningful to visit camps. I do not want to make it part of a tour. Just the thought of it, or of anything other than a journey of remembrance, a pilgrimage. I think what has been so important to me in visiting camps is feeling the presence of souls. Just weeping into those places. I've only been to two. To Dachau and to Terezin and I assume I will be to others, but a personal custom began which I've done at those two -- the whole story around this happening at Dachau I don't need to tell -- but what I have come to do is place a small piece of flint, the stone, flint, somehow finding my way, being able to be really alone at the edge of an oven, and in both of those places I placed a small piece of flint on the edge of the oven just inside. Flint is a stone that makes sparks when struck by steel and it's the spark of life to me. There's wonderful tellings that compare the Jew to flint and we speak of flint in Hallel for instance, when we recite Hallel on the holidays and Rosh Chodesh. But flint can be -- and I often do this with adults and children -- you can drop a piece of flint into water, completely immersed, take it out, and while it's dripping wet strike it with steel and send sparks flying. And that is the comparison to the Jew, that however far, however immersed in the world out there and far away. When something strikes the heart, it produces a spark. That spark is called, in Yiddish, *Dos Pintele Yid*. It's the Jewish point, the Jewish spark. And it's become my own way, just one way, of remembering. Whatever happened to those stones. But at least for a moment they were placed there.

[01:17:37]

Reinstein: I personally would ask way earlier -- it's not only out of obligation. I do feel we have an obligation to remember and to honour, both in pausing and remembering and in drawing meaning from who they were as people, from what happened. But I also, over the years -- in some ways much more is as much emotion as I felt in this time and knowing the survivors and creating these ceremonies, in recent years I have come to feel so close to the Shoah that I can't really explain it. I feel, at times, really overwhelmed by it. Not in the way of not functioning or doing, but I feel its presence and its depth in a far deeper way. I spend a lot of time in Europe but I didn't in this earlier time because my wife is Belgian, and therefore nearer to places very often. Just in Belgium have done a lot of work at the Holocaust memorial in Belgium. My grandparents lived in Antwerp for a time between Russia and the States. But I've developed connections with people who didn't survive and I've discovered and read about, that I say Kaddish for, and there are times when I am among Jews in Belgium who sound like the Jews who were always in those places, that survived and didn't survive. And sometimes they hear my voice among them and it almost sounds distended to me, that it's coming from somewhere else. So I really hold all of that

as someone who is deeply involved in social justice and peace work for all people. The pain of our own people has become much deeper within myself. I think some of it is the reality of the survivors dying. That, you know, as I look at the lists of people that participated in the early ceremonies in Victoria, they're all gone. I think, on one hand, as I shared before when I would travel with Willy Jacobs and I would tell students to look at him and to take in his image and with his words to remember, that I feel that, of this generation that knew survivors and the generations that knew survivors. As they leave, how do we hold who they are? You know, at the time of the destruction of the temples, of those who remembered what it was, and the exiles being led away, that was held and crystalised into our story and into our prayers and remembrances. I think we're coming to that point of how do we integrate this now as we really really begin to move beyond the time of direct contact. That is something I think we need to open our arms and our hearts to being the ones that will carry it on and to hold with love and to transmit with love all that has been carried to this point and at the same time to never allow it to become a burden that weighs us down so that we can't dance or that causes our lips to be unable to sing. We have to be able to do all of that. And I think in doing all of that we will live far richer, deeper lives as Jews and as human beings.

Stanger-Ross: That's a beautiful set of reflections. I really appreciate what you've been saying for a while now. I've just been sitting and appreciating it. There's probably some questions I should ask in service of the project but I'm not going to. I'm going to ask just one out of curiosity that in some senses maybe should be asked after the recorder goes off. But I wonder just about recording your views on it. I went yesterday to the Boston Holocaust memorial and I was curious what your thoughts were on that memorial.

[01:23:52]

Reinstein: I find it moving, a very moving place in the midst of the city. It's very simple and I think it's a powerful memorial. It doesn't create the impact of the places in Europe. It's simply in the proximity of what happened. But I think seeing the names of places and people is very powerful and I'm very grateful that it's there. Whenever I'm in that area I do walk through it. It's also a place where there have been many gatherings of various sorts. There was a very important gathering/walk/demonstration/vigil all rolled together in June, completely coordinated by young people on behalf of migrants, saying that "never again" is now and for everyone. It started at the Holocaust memorial and it ended at a jail where migrants are held. I think it was really beautiful and very hopeful to see that connection made so strongly by young people. So it's a very meaningful place. There have been two desecrations of it in recent years. One, glass panels of names have been shattered and I actually keep here, just in a cabinet, but in the synagogue, in the sanctuary, a small piece of glass from one of the shattered panels. I spoke about that at the time. I was just walking there during one of these -- there were gatherings at the times of these desecrations -- and I just picked this up. So yes, it's an important place.

Stanger-Ross: Is there anything else, before I turn off the recorder, that you want to put on the record?

Reinstein: *laughs* I feel like we've covered a lot. You know, there's more stories and more people to think about. Looking through this material I find personally a bit overwhelming in all

that it evokes, both about people and truly bringing home in such real terms that the survivors really are almost gone. As I look at names here, when they were just people I would call and ask to come visit and would they tell some of their story. And it also brings home to me my own evolution in ways that I'm grateful for and in ways that I'm sad for. So I'm sure there's much more. I speak only as one person with one person's experiences and the insights gained personally that may or may not be similar or shared or valuable. But I'm grateful for the opportunity to engage in this conversation with you. I thank you.

Stanger-Ross: Well thank you. I'll turn off the recorder.

-- END --