HMS Henry Fenichel

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**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

Holocaust survivor, Henry Fenichel, Bergen-Belsen, prisoner exchange, Nazi occupation, hiding in Holland, immigrating to U.S., teaching physics, Holocaust education, Anne Frank, Dutch Red Cross, Israeli children's home, family separation, Statue of Liberty, anti-Semitism

**SPEAKERS**

Jackie Congedo, Cori Silbernagel, Lisa MacVittie, Henry Fenichel, Bella Ouziel, Al Miller, Elisha Wiesel

**Lisa MacVittie** 00:00

I'm the last survivor of the Holocaust in our family.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:04

Behind the words pictures and artifacts in the museum are people whose stories of survival and hope come alive to inspire new generations of upstanders. One by one these stories stir the soul.

**Al Miller** 00:18

Can there really be hope for us?

**Bella Ouziel** 00:21

Mine was 40018. My sister was 40017.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:28

Holocaust survivors, their descendants, liberators, champions of justice and courageous upstanders ask only this, hear my story, so that the lessons they teach will echo for generations.

**Elisha Wiesel** 00:41

I will never meet someone else like my father. But there are many of us who if we come together, can keep his voice alive.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:48

These stories will change you, they will move you to action, inspiring the best of humanity every day.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:54

I'm Jackie Congedo. In this episode, you'll meet Henry Fenichel, who was a very young child living in the Netherlands when the Nazis invaded. Henry's father was deported and murdered in Auschwitz. He and his mother went into hiding but they were discovered and deported. Henry and his mother managed to survive internment in Bergen-Belsen and went to Palestine as part of a prisoner exchange. He eventually made his way to the United States and built a new life teaching physics at the University of Cincinnati until his retirement. Hosting the conversation is Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Cori Silbernagel.

**Cori Silbernagel** 01:12

Hi, Henry, it is lovely to have you here today. I'm, I'm so happy you came down to the center to talk with us. Before you share your story, I want to share a little story of mine for you.

**Cori Silbernagel** 01:51

Yeah so I started working at the Holocaust center in 2015 and you were one of the first Holocaust survivors I met, ever. I came into the work not knowing very much about the Holocaust and not feeling personally connected and I think it's because of your story and the story of others I've met over these years, that there's truly no other work that I feel like I should be doing.

**Henry Fenichel** 01:51

Thank you, that's impressive.

**Cori Silbernagel** 01:51

So from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for sharing your story with us today. As we get started, I'm hoping you can tell me a little bit about yourself in general and then we can dive into your story.

**Henry Fenichel** 01:51

That'll be nice to hear.

**Henry Fenichel** 02:55

Well, the beginning, you'll hear probably in the questions and answers. So I'll go backwards. I'm now retired from the University of Cincinnati, where I've served almost 40 years as a physics professor. Once I retired, I stopped writing equations on the board. And instead of doing physics, I'm spending time with this institution, the Holocaust center here. And I wonder sometimes whether, you know, my background has been bad, and I'm lucky to have survived, but possibly I'm thinking maybe I survived to bear witness that it actually happened. And so we're and I think about that more and more as time goes on, you know, less physics and more our history and background and unfortunately, what we're listening in the news nowadays, the battles is Israel and Gaza and what have you. Yeah,

**Cori Silbernagel** 03:58

yeah, I think it's more important than ever that we learn about the Holocaust and take those lessons into today. Right. So tell me about your Holocaust experience. What happened to your family? What was your life like before the war?

**Henry Fenichel** 04:19

Okay, well, a in a nutshell when people asked me so you're probably familiar with the story of Anne Frank, the Diary of Anne Frank. In a way my life was similar, meaning Jewish kid, Dutch boy, Nazis invade, my father is rounded up never to return from Auschwitz. My mother and I go into hiding. We are captured and end up in Bergen-Belsen. Except my story has a happy ending and that I survived Bergen-Belsen where Anne Frank perished. Jumping to the next level in my life. I ended up in Israel and Palestine. I in pre state Israel in 1944. And the powers that be thought it was smart to separate my mother and me at the time, I thought that was ridiculous. But they felt, I think it's a socialism and to keep the same concept in Israel, that I was sent her children's home while she wants to spend some time with family members, and in order to recover, and you know, it was not a prison, the horror the children's home, but it does, she would come and visit me and all holidays, vacations I would be with her. So help naturally. Yeah, somewhere down the line. She got remarried. And so I started out speaking Dutch, came to Israel, Palestine, I switched to Hebrew in a children's home. She got married to somebody who spoke Yiddish. So I had to trade that. For Yiddish. My stepfather had family and two brothers in this country, in U.S., and they suggested at the time life is rough. There's a war fight going on, right? Why don't you come to the United States? So they arranged for us to come as immigrant - us meaning my mother, stepfather, and myself. And in January 1953. We arrived in the New York Harbor on a boat. Name of the boat was the Andrea... Andrea Doria - there's a big story with that. But anyway, she, as you're coming to New York Harbor, it's very impressive Statue of Liberty on the left skyscrapers on the right. And on a small black and white TV. President Eisenhower's giving his inaugural speech. That was my welcome to this incredible country. And so then I had to learn a new language. I'm still working on my English.

**Cori Silbernagel** 06:54

I don't know I think your English is better than mine. Tell me about about your hometown. Where did you grow up?

**Henry Fenichel** 07:03

That was until the age of four. So the memory's not detailed, you know, I remember zoo, going to the zoo and, but I don't remember a nursery school for example. And but but the town was the the Hague, which is the capital of the Netherlands. Amsterdam is the New York City equivalent. The Hague is the Washington DC.

**Cori Silbernagel** 07:31

What happened when the Nazis occupied the Netherlands?

**Henry Fenichel** 07:38

Well, they just they took over. And in a way not all the Dutch folks objected to it. And some welcomed them because they were at the same time, already fighting on the east side against the Russians, and the Russian and communism the bad guys. And so they were accepted. Also the language is very, not that different. I mean, the Dutch, if you know Dutch, then the German you can understand or what have you. So initially, what happens, they didn't round up, come in and round up the Jews. For the first year, they did nothing, but slowly took over. So the cop on the street corner, instead of being a Dutch cop was now a Nazi cop or a Dutch collaborator. They took over public transportation, buses, trains, slowly run by them. And then eventually, when they got all organized they went to their mission, their original mission was to round up the Jews.

**Cori Silbernagel** 08:46

How did life change for your mom and dad? I know you were very young at that time, but their lives were forever changed, right?

**Henry Fenichel** 08:55

One of the ways that you they control things that said, Jews cannot be in within certain proximity of the ocean - got to be more inland. And my father had a business in a different community. And so, we will not come always together. But and my memories are limited. As I said it was, I was four years old when we went into hiding and six years old when at the end of the process, you know, I see some photographs here and there and I have some photographs of me playing with kids, other kids. So I must have done that.

**Cori Silbernagel** 09:46

Tell me about tell me about going into hiding. You went into hiding with your mother. Well, what were the circumstances around that?

**Henry Fenichel** 09:58

The hiding location was a child nursery kind of facility. But it was typical Dutch facility where there would be the first floor would be the facility. And then there'd be a few stories of apartments and other people living and I played and we would play in a yard or across the street, there was a little park, and I remember playing over there with some other kids. But that was, that's the only recollection I have. After the war more recently, a few years ago, when we decided it's time to go back and actually see, find out how much of what I'm thinking of actually happened. And the Dutch as bad as the Germans - they keep good records. And so I found some records and details when we were captured when we were taken, rescued, and so forth.

**Cori Silbernagel** 10:57

Will you share a little bit about what happened to your father? I know he wasn't in hiding with you and your mother?

**Henry Fenichel** 11:04

No, my father was at the time when he was rounded up, he was in the business part, which was in a different village in the northern part of Holland, probably a half an hour, an hour bus ride or train ride. And, and he was rounded up over there. And I actually did hear from... there's a Dutch private citizen, I guess, was trying to find out what happened. And he sent me a note indicating he found a record of when my father was captured. And the details of him going being arrested in the location. And from there ended up going being two years ultimately ending ending up in Auschwitz.

**Cori Silbernagel** 12:00

Wow. What is it like for you later in life, to have travelled back to some of those places and, and to have been in touch with with the person who found found out what happened to your father?

**Henry Fenichel** 12:18

Well, it's difficult. The one... again, it's the thing, I was very young, so I did not have the time or the years develop the camaraderie and the closeness with the Father. You know, by time you got to be a teenager, you have conversations, you know, politically, you know, what they do? I didn't have to, didn't go through all of that. So, so it's almost I mean, it's sad to say but it's just a name. I mean, when I see what happens and when I see what I as a father, serve to my kids, I see what I was missing. But until that point. It's... I was too young to keep a diary.

**Cori Silbernagel** 13:04

Yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 13:05

So so we didn't ever these fancy toys that are taking pictures over here to take a lot of pictures. So all of that two photographs that I got, I was able to recover after the war.

**Cori Silbernagel** 13:18

Yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 13:20

One of the advantages of my job at the university professor, we have these things called sabbaticals. At the University of Cincinnati, their regiment is that after seven years, or the seventh year, you can take a year off and go teach somewhere also or do research somewhere else. And needless to say, I took advantage of it and combined business and pleasure so to speak. So I I took every time I had a sabbatical I took it. And I. Over the years I spent about three different sabbaticals in Israel, three different institutions, the Weitzman Institute, University of Jerusalem and so forth in Haifa, Technion. But one of those I also spent in Holland to go back and see what life might have been. So we spent a year. My wife and my kids at that point were teenagers. And we sent them to the Dutch school to learn the language. The Dutch rather than to our tours as near an English speaking school. And I worked at the university teaching but mostly doing research in laboratories. I... I call myself a plumber. I'm an experimental physicist. I had a lab where extreme low temperatures close to absolute zero liquid nitrogen, helium, studied experiments. And so in the morning before I would go to, to my to the lab with my graduate students and the colleagues, I went to the language lab you know, it's a university, you're around students in the university, there's always a language lab. So they had a language lab to teach Dutch. So I think I'll go and sit the language lab for a while. And then the language would come back to me. After doing that for a few days, and I go back to the lab, this is where have you been doc? This morning? So as I mentioned, I went to the language lab to see, to learn a language says, What are you crazy, everybody over here speaks English, and the Dutch speak English and French and what have you. Unfortunately, I listen to them. So I didn't spend much time because everybody speaks English. But fortunately, my kids, my daughters are in there, setting an environment in school in high school, picked up the language, and one of them is still a...friend with the Dutch girl, who was here a few months ago, actually visiting us visiting my daughter.

**Cori Silbernagel** 16:06

Wow. That's amazing. So in touch, so you those connections. So looking seeing you today, and with your daughters, that's beautiful. To go back and your story a bit more. You were talking about you being in hiding with your mother. What happened? Tell me the story of how, how you were caught and where you went.

**Henry Fenichel** 16:33

So the hiding part was not being locked up in a room and not being... and it was in a children's home. So I was out with the kids playing, you know, when I was on the street and how they rounded me up. I don't know who told on them. Or maybe even I may have said, you know, I'm a Jewish kid maybe who knows, when I was asked the question. But when we were caught we were taken to a what's called a transit camp called Westerbork, which is a an immigrant camp on the border of the Netherlands and Germany. By the way, the term or the name of the country is the Netherlands, not Holland. Holland is one of the provinces, one of the states in the country called the Netherlands. And that camp was a transit camp. And in fact, it was a camp that was built before World War Two, where they put in immigrants temporarily, you know, as people, not not not just Jews, but others from Europe came and wanted to live and come to Holland, they stuck him in there for a while. And then that thing, the details, I don't know. But it became a transit camp, not a concentration again. But what I mean by a transit, transit camp, the Nazis dumped the Jews in Westerbork. And then from there, they would be shipped out. Most would end up to other camps, which you prefer not to be in. But we were in the transit camp for, for a while. And for few months, less than a year. And then at one point, what as part of our survival was, somehow my mother was able to get us on a potential exchange with citizens from Palestine and us. And so at that, and that was in the process already. And at that point, we got shipped out from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in February of 1944. And that's where we were and that's my memory a little more better memory of camps. Both Westerbork but Bergen-Belsen, I guess are a little older and a little more painful. Yeah.

**Cori Silbernagel** 19:01

What were some of your memories of Bergen Belsen?

**Henry Fenichel** 19:04

I remember distinctly the daily morning roll call. You had to get out of the barracks. I mean and. And I stayed with my mother in the barracks she was in I guess was a women's barrack. And we would have to stand outside and there was this big barrel like a garbage pail full of some slop they called soup. And we had little tin cans and I remember somebody would ladle some stuff in it and put our little can we got some black bread to eat with it. After the meal, they asked us to few kids in there to clean those barrels. And in retrospect, I don't think that was punishment. That was to give us a chance maybe to find another piece of potato or some more nourishment or more food. So So that's that part. The other thing I remember mostly because my mother reminded me that that is happen every day, she would take a little piece of bread, put it aside, so that we on Friday night, we will have a little extra bread and that was our observance of the Sabbath having the challah symbolically.

**Cori Silbernagel** 19:04

Yeah, that's beautiful

**Henry Fenichel** 19:18

She was she was an observant woman came from a family.

**Cori Silbernagel** 20:09

Yeah,

**Henry Fenichel** 20:09

You have to put her here to be interviewed. I know more about her than about me.

**Cori Silbernagel** 20:36

That's okay. I think that is a beautiful story. I you know, I often when you share your story, I think about how much I wish I could have met your mom because she sounds to be a courageous woman, a loving woman, and to the story you just shared a spiritual, proud Jewish woman. And I think that that is really beautiful

**Henry Fenichel** 21:11

She is very much so. So I guess you should check my family members or check with my wife. What was it like when she first met my mother?

**Cori Silbernagel** 21:20

Yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 21:22

And thereafter.

**Cori Silbernagel** 21:25

So you started to share with me that in Westerbork, your mom heard about a prisoner exchange happening. And then when you move down to Bergen Belsen this this communication continued. Tell me a little bit about what the prisoner exchange was. And then I also want to hear kind of what where the story where the story takes you both.

**Henry Fenichel** 21:55

Okay, prisoner exchange are common in wars. So for example, the Nazis captured Allied soldiers, the Allies capture Nazi soldiers. Periodically, they stopped the fighting on a certain date or time and a prisoner exchange takes place. Okay, so that's one source of an exchange. My exchange was somewhat different in the following sense. Again, a reminder historically, before World War One, there were no countries in the Middle East. It was run by the Turks, it was called the Ottoman Empire. World War One, the British and the French came, took it over and created countries, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, what have you. So the point as a part of it, and Palestine was then created. Jordan, which is east of the Jordan River was called country of Jordan. And the west of the... of the Jordan River was called Palestine. In Palestine at the time there lived... there were a few villages run by German citizens starting in the 1800's German Christians from Southern Germany who call themselves Templars, not after knight Templars of the Middle Ages, but they believe that each one of us has a temple... temple in ourselves and it is important for Christians to reside in the Holy Land, speed up the return of the Messiah. So basically, in 1870s 90s 1900s, they brought in the high tech of Europe into this desert called Palestine which was run by the British. Some of these still remain today if you go to Jerusalem today, one of the suburb is called the German colony. And the temple is built that and it just still and the heads from other villages around the country anyway, jump to World War Two, Nazis come, rise to power. A war starts in Europe. Many of the men, Templar men in Palestine go back to Germany to fight for the cause. Why? Makes no sense to me but then you have Jewish friends, Christian friends, Arab residents, why would you go and join the Nazis? Anyway, some did. The men that didn't go there, British rounded up, shipped them off to Australia, where they're still today, there's a German colony in Melbourne, Australia, so here you have a few hundred women and children. German citizens in British controlled Palestine they want to go back to Germany. If somebody says, You need to have an exchange, you have Germans and Palestine, that's gonna go back to Germany. Let's find people from Palestine in Germany who want to go back to Palestine. Needless to say, there were none of those, or very few if any. So on the pretext of having a connection to Palestine, lists were created. It turns out, my father's family, parents and brothers and sisters, my father grew up in Berlin, Germany, not just come to power, they go away, they decided to go to Palestine. My father by then was in his 20s. And he says, to go to Palestine, I want to see the world. I want to go to Holland, Belgium, France, and then I'll join you in Palestine, early 1930s, say 32, 33. And that's what happened. They went to Palestine, he goes to Holland, meets this gorgeous woman, marries her, I come along, that slowed the process. But there was always hope eventually to join them. And how my mother used that connection to put us on a list with the connection to Palestine. She did mostly in Bergen-Belsen, of course, and I think by the time we went to...I mean in Westerbork, most of that initial stuff was done in Westerbork. And then was continued in Bergen-Belsen. And but I guess that by the time we got to Bergen-Belsen, we already slated for foreign exchange.

**Cori Silbernagel** 26:32

How were you able to prove that you had this connection to Palestine?

**Henry Fenichel** 26:39

You need my mother here.

**Cori Silbernagel** 26:40

Yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 26:41

I have no idea about the details.

**Cori Silbernagel** 26:43

Yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 26:45

There are documents and, but, what she did exactly, or who she had to bribe or some of it was contacts that she knew the right people may be although when she, she she was in Holland. When we lived in Holland, my father worked in the business in the store. And then my mother was a seamstress. And maybe that somehow she knew people are the right people.

**Cori Silbernagel** 27:14

Okay, so we brought out a few of our really special documents from you, that we preserved within our collection. One of them is this red cross documents. When you share the story of the prisoner exchange, this this is the document that that flashes in my eye. And can you explain to me and to all of us that that will listen to this story? Why this document was significant?

**Henry Fenichel** 27:54

Okay, so this is a Red Cross document the Dutch Red Cross. And I guess this they were involved in trying to locate in our background. And, and it grades... might as well read it. This is a message of in, yeah, in December 1943. Please inform Paula Fenichel Fischler family in Westerbork, that they have been registered on the fifth... Zionist list for immigration into Palestine. So in other words, this is a document, which tells, which indicates that my mother, mainly my father, and my mother and me well, before the war started, we've already started the paperwork in order to get to Palestine. But you know, when you go across countries, you need documents, you need passports, and all of that. So this indicates that they were ready, that was in the process before the war started. And, and then it says, you know, everything was important, you need numbers. So, this is the number and it says the Foreign Office will communicate, how to proceed from here. And that was, this is a document of December end of December 1943.

**Cori Silbernagel** 29:23

So, and

**Henry Fenichel** 29:24

this, so this would have been received while we were in Westerbork.

**Cori Silbernagel** 29:29

Um, so this is really the document that document that saved saved your lives. And that allowed you to leave

**Henry Fenichel** 29:41

at that big initial round camp, Westerbork separated us. And from there on, we ended up being

**Cori Silbernagel** 29:49

Wow. Wow. So So when we started talking, you spoke a little bit about arriving in Israel. Palestine at the time, and what life was like there. But, but again, tell me a little bit about what the journey to Palestine was like and what happened when you got there.

**Henry Fenichel** 30:16

The journey was in a proper train, not in a cattle car that brings people into camps. And it was a typical transport train in Europe where you have cabins, and you have maybe your bench on one side, two, three people can sit on the bench on the other side. It was about 10 days, so you had to sleep. So at night, you slide the benches together? Well, if you have three people here and three here and you slide it together, it's kind of not much space to sleep. Luggage we didn't have. So me as a kid, they tied me up in the luggage rack. And I remember having sleeping in a luggage rack on these trains.

**Cori Silbernagel** 30:58

How old were you? At that?

**Henry Fenichel** 31:00

I was at that point six years old. Approaching six.

**Cori Silbernagel** 31:03

Well, and we have another item from the collection is this immigration document with a photo of your mother and in you only six years old? Right on her hip.

**Henry Fenichel** 31:15

that was taken when we arrived in Palestine.

**Cori Silbernagel** 31:19

You shared with me when we started talking that you and your mother were separated? And that it wasn't with with bad intention. But that it was the thought of the time in rebuilding. Where did you live during that time you were separated.

**Henry Fenichel** 31:38

The separation was common in the following sense. Many of the people who arrived in Palestine before the stake was established from collective from which was common and in the eastern Soviet Union. And then a collective farm. It's a big family, and the families and their their husbands and wife and their kids. So during the daytime, the parents work or do their work and the kids are at school, they play together and evening, but at night, the kids are separated into a separate kid's bedroom. So all the kids stay in the bedroom and the parents have their own little facility. So the idea of separating kids from parents is not unusual in that kind of resetting. Yeah, so anyway, that's what I think so so that. So anyway, decided my mother was not in great shape, health wise. So they decided why doesn't she go and live with my family. The family being I mentioned, my father's family was there. And my father's sister was married by the net, some kids already in the Tel Aviv area. So she went to live with them. And I was sent to a children's home in a community called Nahariya, which was a village close to the Lebanese border on the Mediterranean. Right on the beach. I mean, it was a was a children's home. Two stories, maybe 30, 40 kids. And I remember that much better. And I remember going to the local. This was sort of our sleeping facility. During the daytime, we went to the local village school, regular Elementary School, and that was a place to sleep. Any opportunity my mother had holidays, vacations, whatever she would come and visit, or she would come and take me on vacations and rejoin the family in Tel Aviv area, which is a district so that I remember much better at that point. I'm six years old. I thought it was reasonably normal. I didn't know. And you know, I didn't know that this is different. Yeah. Even though I had cousins by then lived at home. Yeah.

**Cori Silbernagel** 33:54

Well, I know, I've seen some photographs of you during that time in your life. And you look happy. And I guess Yeah, you know, I think that some of those memories, maybe are not all bad at that point.

**Henry Fenichel** 34:14

No, it's happy. And remember, just before that the memories of the Nazi soldiers going around wherever I am. They were gone.

**Cori Silbernagel** 34:22

Yeah, yeah. This is an entirely new world for you. And

**Henry Fenichel** 34:27

the one thing that I remember specifically, this is before before the State of Israel was establish its 1940s and we were on the beach, a children's home. And those days, not everybody who wanted to come to Palestine was accepted, you know, the border rules and what have you. So a lot of Jews tried to come in illegally, and they would go on a boat, and the boat would illegally beach on the beach. Each on the beach, the sandy beach, in front of our building. And in the morning, the local police was, would come in and check the kids in the home, you know, and says these kids weren't here yesterday. Of course, we were told, told, of course they were here. They knew they know the game. And so I remember that in terms of illegal immigration before the State of Israel was established.

**Cori Silbernagel** 35:29

So community, the community was taking care of each other and refugees too. Wow. So your mother remarries. And eventually the three of you emigrate to the United States. Why did why did your mother and stepfather leave?

**Henry Fenichel** 35:53

Good question, you know, that life life was rough in Israel at the time, you didn't know what's going to happen next. The state... was established already. But there was still fighting in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the war was still technically on. And my stepfather? I don't know if his plan to do that even before they got married. You know, he, his family, a brother and sister and their extended family were in this country and knew us and convinced him to go. And when I asked my mother occasionally why we did that she said she thought I was probably going to be better. You better for me give me opportunities, educational opportunities that might not be there. Yeah.

**Cori Silbernagel** 36:45

You've shared with me before about, you know, your first impressions of arriving in the United States, seeing the Statue of Liberty. Eisenhower's speech? What, what were your first moments in our country? Like? Did it meet your expectations? Was it what you were planning for?

**Henry Fenichel** 37:11

Yes, and no, we lived in a neighborhood in an apartment house that had other immigrant type folks in it. And it took me a while I still had to work on my English language. I was thrown into the school. And I think that was at that point, I was a senior in elementary school. And I lived in a neighborhood that was predominantly Italian, you know, in Brooklyn, each nationality of this little neighborhood. And when I went to school, and I went to school and picked up the language and tried to do things, but I hadn't experienced that still sticks in my mind of the problems. Meaning, one day in class, I don't remember what the issue was a mathematics problem was something my fellow classmates didn't do very well, but I did quite well. So she says, Look at this kid, he just came in. And he's doing so much better than you are. Aren't you ashamed of yourself. This is no way to get me to become friends. I'm a bad guy. You know, I'm a symbol.

**Cori Silbernagel** 38:29

Yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 38:29

So I'd even included ones being on the sidewalk. A little battle, little hitting each other. Yeah. Well, having been growing up in Israel, that part I knew how to deal with to the point where in the future whenever you walk on the sidewalk, they walked towards me and I walk this way. They show me they run to the side of the street. Not dark to avoid me. Yeah, I don't look like a big fellow. But that's the memory I have.

**Cori Silbernagel** 39:02

What did your What did your mother do? In what was her rebuilding story? You went to school? What about her?

**Henry Fenichel** 39:12

She continued being a seamstress... acquaintances or maybe made acquaintances down the street. We lived in a residential area and one block away was a main drag. There was a store of clothing or whatever and she did fix people's dresses and clothing. That was a specialty. And in fact, my stepfather was also a tailor way back but the he he actually had not in Israel, but in Poland, where he came from he he had a plant for working with clothing and sewing and details. Maybe that's how she got to know her.

**Cori Silbernagel** 39:58

You rebuilt your lives in Brooklyn. and how how did you come to Cincinnati? That's quite far away.

**Henry Fenichel** 40:07

Yeah. Okay so in Brooklyn, I went to high school. By the way, the name Brooklyn comes from Holland in Netherland as a city called Brooklyn. And I went to a high school called New Utrecht. Utrecht is a city in Holland. So it's like coming back home, a small world, small world. Anyway, after the high school, I went to Brooklyn College. There, you get a free education if you can make it. And I met this gorgeous woman over there. And she is my princess. Her name is Diana. She's my Princess Diana. And we got to a stage we actually met at the Hillel Foundation. The Hillel is a Jewish student club at the university - very common even today. And we ended up getting married. And then I went to graduate school. At that point, I was married... we married first year were there I remember the deep detail. And after I got my PhD, which was Rutgers University, just in, across the river from New York City, Brooklyn is one of the suburbs of New York City. Anyway. And then her family and my family were lived in a Brooklyn area in the New York area. So we decided for our first job, one to draw a circle, one day's drive. So that on weekends, we can hop on the car and go back into the city and visit with the family and then be back in class Monday morning, so forth. Cincinnati, we're sort of on the edge of it. And in fact, we haven't done what we were planning to do. But you know, figure first job and then move on. Discovered this Cincinnati as a wonderful community, a nice place to raise kids, and good neighbors, friendly. People, like you guys are interviewing me right now, you know, so. So there was no reason to move on. So it was the only job I've ever had. And I spent the technically 38 years but when I retired, they stopped paying you. They give you a title Professor Emeritus, that emeritus certificate gives you free parking on campus. Your parking spot is still there. But in fact, I continued for a few more years, Supervising graduate students are slowly eased out of my labs. So to let other people come into that. Yeah. And then, after that happened, as I may have mentioned, I stopped writing equations on the board. And instead of giving talks about physics, I figured maybe that's where I survived. Maybe I should tell my story. And yeah, I switched subjects.

**Cori Silbernagel** 43:23

And you've been sharing your story for many years now. Is, is your act of storytelling, an act of resistance against the Nazis? Have you ever thought about it that way?

**Henry Fenichel** 43:41

I think not so much in terms of resistance. But as I sometimes tell myself, you know, the reason I survived maybe is to bear witness that it has happened, you know, people who deny the Holocaust, or these antisemitism, all of these things, I was there. Now, you may not believe what I'm saying, but I know that I'm telling you the truth, you know, and that's...and you guys in this organization over here, the Holocaust & Humanity Center, you're doing an incredible job in telling the story. You're just incredible.

**Cori Silbernagel** 44:18

Oh, thank you. We, you know, we are an organization that was founded by Holocaust survivors and the very least we can do is to remember and share their stories and your story. What, what are some of the lessons of the Holocaust that you hope to impart on on the students you speak to and anyone else that hears your story?

**Henry Fenichel** 44:54

Well, the lesson of course, is that you should avoid that in the future. How do you avoid that in the future? To begin with, you're trying not to have autocratic leaders. Unfortunately, nowadays, around the world, people are elected democratically, and become autocrats. Now a benevolent autocrat is okay. But people just worry about themselves and don't like Black people or Jews or what have you. That's terrible. And so we need to avoid that if we can.

**Cori Silbernagel** 45:32

Yeah, yeah.

**Henry Fenichel** 45:34

But I don't know how you do that. I mean, I have a philosophy of why we have these political problems, for example, in the country, which I can share with you. In the good old days, we had one or two radio stations before these toys came along, and we would all listen to the same news. And then we could be on the left politically on the right politically, and we would have a discussion, but we discussed the same thing... we definitely heard, that's what we heard, and we disagree or agree with what we heard. Nowadays, with the internet, and all these channels that are around, you just pick up what you want to hear. And so the people on the left, listen to one thing, and the people on the right, listen to the other thing, and sure don't have an intelligent conversation. I mean, you're just your, your facts are different. And that's one of the problems. So even though I'm a firm believer in the internet, and, and progress, it's one issue that has developed that we need to learn how to deal with.

**Cori Silbernagel** 46:48

Yeah, I think, you know, to that point, Holocaust education can help us humanize the history and and in that work, we find more in common with each other than differences. So I think it's incredibly important that you continue sharing your story, and

**Henry Fenichel** 47:17

thank you. I appreciate hearing that. But

**Cori Silbernagel** 47:23

Do you have hope for the future?

**Henry Fenichel** 47:31

I think so. I mean, there are some issues that we'll learn about to learn how to deal with them. But ultimately, there ought to be enough of people positive people, like you folks over here, to be able to make sure that to go in the right direction.

**Cori Silbernagel** 47:46

Yes, I agree. I think if the upstanding citizens continue to speak and act, that overcomes a lot of problems that we face today. You're absolutely right. Well, I want to thank you so much for talking with me today. Every time we speak, I learned something new about you. And And again, as I started prior to meeting you and other Holocaust survivors, I had little understanding, and I am honored to be in a position where I can sit here today and say that, that I understand a little bit more. And I'm very excited to continue talking with you. Many more times to come.

**Henry Fenichel** 48:43

Thank you very much. And I speak for I think the other survivors as well. We really appreciate you and your organization and the support you're giving us we're not left alone somewhere to.... We have a... we have a home. You're you're part of our home.

**Cori Silbernagel** 49:01

Oh, thank you, Henry. Thank you.

**Jackie Congedo** 49:04

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