Hear My Story: Hank and Anita Schneider transcript

**Lisa MacVittie** 00:00

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

**Jackie Congedo** 00:03

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** 00:20

See 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** 00:40

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. I'm Jackie Congedo, and in this episode, we're going to talk with Hank and Anita Schneider, two very special people here at the Holocaust and Humanity Center. Hank's parents both survived the war. They met through a fence at a concentration camp and married after the war, and came here when Hank was only three years old. And today they talked to us about their family history, but also their family legacy of giving back, establishing our January of free admission and what they hope others learn from all that they've been through. It is such a pleasure to have Hank and Anita Schneider here with us today in our museum to better understand more about your family story. Really your collective family story, of course, your parents and their history, but also the way that legacy continues to inspire the way your family thinks about its role in the world and in our community today. So thank you so much for taking the time to sit down and talk with us about that. Hank, I wanted to just take it all the way back to the beginning and start a long time ago with the story of your parents. I know you were born in Germany right after the after the war,

**Jackie Congedo** 02:12

Stuttgart, let me make sure Stuttgart and your parents came here when you were three years old, and we have that adorable photo of you in our museum in the aftermath exhibit where your curly blonde, was it blonde? No?

**Anita Schneider** 02:12

actually, kind of like your hair.

**Jackie Congedo** 02:25

Was it red?

**Hank Schneider** 02:30

No, wasn't that red

**Jackie Congedo** 02:34

No, somewhere between blonde and red. Beautiful locks were blowing in the in the wind in New York, right next to the New York Harbor, right next to the Statue of Liberty and and I'm wondering if you can tell us about some of your earliest memories of your mom and dad, where you remember sort of entering the story, where do your memories start?

**Hank Schneider** 03:01

Wow. I think my memories start early on, when my, when, my when, really, when my dad showed up one day at the house having had back surgery. That was a Saturday morning, and there's a knock at the door, and we opened the door, and my dad's there, and he's in a robe and pajamas. He just walked out of Sheltering Oaks nursing home hospital. He had had surgery, and he didn't want to be there anymore, so he shows up at the house. I remember that very, very vividly. I mean, he escaped. I mean, he left, he just left, he just left.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:43

This was

**Hank Schneider** 03:44

He didn't want to be there. I couldn't have been more than five years old.

**Jackie Congedo** 03:48

So this was after you had come to the States already.

**Hank Schneider** 03:50

Yeah, we'd come to the States. My dad went to work for company in Norwood, and then went to work for Standard Textile. And he had hurt his back, and he had surgery, and I remember him on that Saturday morning, it's 10 o'clock in the morning. I still remember that. I still remember what the apartment looked like.

**Jackie Congedo** 04:14

Where were you living?

**Hank Schneider** 04:15

We lived on Landon court, which was across Burnet Avenue from Erkenbrecher, which is where the zoo is, in a big apartment that we had two boarders in order to pay for the rent. We had a fellow from GE and a fellow from Ford rent rooms on one half of the apartment. We had a pocket door. They got the right side of the pocket door, and we got the left side the pocket door. My mom had a bed. My dad and I slept on a mattresses, on two mattresses. I remember that it's early, early, early, early memories.

**Jackie Congedo** 04:52

And you, you lived there until you were?

**Hank Schneider** 04:53

We lived on Landon court till I was in the fifth grade in. And we moved to Bond Hill.

**Jackie Congedo** 05:02

And you know, as a child, you you remember what it was like. You know, like most of us, probably think back about our childhood, and you know the bits and pieces of things we remember from our parents or from friends or just what life was like. And now as an adult, you know you have come to learn so much more about your parents' history and what they were carrying in those early days, and what it was to move through, what they had been through, and as new Americans in this country and really rebuild. Can you take me back to the years as you've now learned them... the years before the war. Tell me a little bit about your mom and your dad and their their their story before the war.

**Hank Schneider** 05:48

The part that I know, my dad was from a town called Szczakowa, which was 35 kilometers from Krakow, and my mother was from a town called Sosnowiec. My mother lived in an apartment building. There were six kids and a father and mother and my grandfather, who I was named after. Chaim, was a singer, sewing machine, salesman, and the town he was the guy that if there was a problem in within the Jewish community, they would come to him for advice. He wasn't a lawyer, he wasn't well educated, but he had he was a salesman, according to my mom, lot of common sense. People would come. If they had an issue, they would come and they would see him. They would talk to him. Never had any money. My father was a one of nine children, the youngest. His father died when my dad was 10, before the war. Before the war, my dad was the gopher. My dad helped. They had a little restaurant, and you know the story well, I walked five miles to go to school. He were driving a bicycle to go get the wine and the whiskey for the restaurant. So years later, my brother and I and my dad went to Poland. We went to this little town. We found the restaurant still open. We found the apartment that they lived in, which was above the restaurant we ran into on purpose. We ran into my dad's best friend when he was growing up. So my dad was a soldier on horseback in the Polish army before the war, and when they started rounding people up, they rounded up the family. My dad was best friends with a guy who was couple years older than he was. My dad wasn't put into a ghetto. His whole family, the ones that still lived there, were all put in the ghetto. My dad wanted to help. Couldn't go into the ghetto. Had to have permission to go into ghetto. Got permission on Sundays, as I think a lot of other people did, to go into the ghetto and to see the relatives.

**Jackie Congedo** 08:08

And this was because of his status with the army.

**Hank Schneider** 08:11

Well, I don't think he had big status, but because he was a soldier, and because they knew him, they let him in. He saw how they were deteriorating health wise, okay, and wanted to go in and stay in, because nobody knew what was going to happen in the ghettos. Nobody knew what was going to happen if there was going to be anything after, he had to go to the mayor of the city to get a letter saying he was Jewish, so that they would let him go in and live in the ghetto. So he goes. He lives in the ghetto. After a short period of time, the Germans came in and said, Okay, you go this way, or you go this way. But you can... This is to the two sisters that were still living there, my dad, two of my dad's sisters, they could go with the mother to the left, or they could go with my dad to the right. They chose two girls to be with the mother. None of them survived, and the other six children were also the boys and girls were also killed.

**Hank Schneider** 08:58

So your dad was the only

**Hank Schneider** 09:07

my dad was the only one out of nine that survived.

**Jackie Congedo** 09:20

My gosh. So, so he's living in the ghetto, right? And the ghetto is liquidated, liquidated, and he is sent to

**Hank Schneider** 09:30

he's sent to a camp, a work camp. These weren't killing camps. He went, ultimately, to nine different places. He met my mother in a place called Ludwigsdorf through a barbed wire fence. He was introduced to her by a man who became my uncle, who lived in the apartment building, who was going out with and in love with my mother's sister. So he intro... David introduced them through the fence. My dad then was at eight other facilities when the war was over. They were both liberated May the 11th, my dad somehow went back to Ludwigsdorf to see if my mother was there. Nobody knows how he got there. Did he steal a jeep? Did he steal a car? Did he ride a donkey? You know? Did he walk? Did take a bus. How did he get there? We never asked. He never talked about it. He found her. He said to her, "Edja, Ellen, will you marry me?" And she said, "Can I think about it?" And he looked at his watch, and he says, [in Polish]. You can think about it till 12 o'clock. I want to go find my family."

**Jackie Congedo** 10:41

Wow.

**Hank Schneider** 10:41

And so that was May the 11th, July 1 they got married, and July 17, a year later, I was born.

**Jackie Congedo** 10:50

Oh my gosh. And so he he went to look for the rest of his family. But no one had no one else had survived.

**Hank Schneider** 10:58

No, we. No we. We went to the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust survivors in Washington, and we went to the auditorium, and one of the pillars was my dad's town. We went to that town, the pillar with that town on it, and there were two women sitting behind the counter checking names, and one of them looked up and knew my dad and knew his sister, she had died two days before the end of the war, before my dad and my mom were liberated. So that was it. There was no nobody else we could find.

**Jackie Congedo** 11:21

Wow.

**Hank Schneider** 11:25

There were no other relatives.

**Jackie Congedo** 11:37

Going back to the, you know, his decision. I'm just thinking also about the what a complicated place that must have been for him, you know, to be serving. And you know, we can all think about this history, knowing what came later, now, with a kind of lens on it, but in the moment, as you said, no one knew what was ahead. No one could have imagined. Certainly, you know, the Jews who were caught up in this, so many of them never, in their wildest nightmares, could have imagined what was coming. Particularly, I would imagine folks like, you know, like your like your your dad, who was serving in, you know, in a for the Polish army, right? I mean, did he ever talk about what that was like to see people who he had served with, friends and neighbors sort of turn.

**Hank Schneider** 12:36

I don't think that my dad had any connection with anybody that he had served with, because of where they were. They were in a small town, you know, it had less than 1000 people that lived in the town. I think all of those older, because, remember, he was younger, the youngest of the group of soldiers that he was friends with and served with. I think they were all scattered. I think they were all, first of all, they weren't Jewish, right, right? None of them were Jewish. Okay, so when we went back to visit, to try to find the restaurant in the town, when my brother and I and my dad went, we ran into his best friend, yes, it wasn't Jewish, very complicated. But we found him, and he and my dad, in 40 degree weather, went outside and talked for two hours. When we got back in the car to leave, we asked him, What did you and Friedrich talk about? And he said, everything. And Friedrich said, the last thing he said to me was, Joe, you didn't have to leave. We would have protected you. We would have taken care of you. And my dad, who doesn't have this kind of personality, looks at him and says, Friedrich, it's 50 years ago. You could tell me anything today. Well, so my brother and I are in the car crying, because it's not my dad's style to talk like that, to say those kind of things to anybody. So,

**Jackie Congedo** 14:06

yeah, that's, as I said, something I think that, you know, we don't often think about in terms of what it was like to live in that time, the complexity of people's circumstances, and you know, how they navigated things changing in real time, like we know they did. Tell us a little bit more about your mom. She was raised near Warsaw?

**Hank Schneider** 14:29

No. My mother was raised in Sosnowiec okay, right? Which

**Jackie Congedo** 14:33

is near what's, what's it closest

**Hank Schneider** 14:35

I don't know. But it's a big city. It's a quarter million people. Even today, it's very, uh, there were a lot of Jews in Sosnowiec. So a lot of Jews lost their lives that lived there. There are so many great stories that she told, we're living in Cincinnati, and a family comes move moves to Cincinnati, and um Albert Weisbrot's mother, okay, was from the same town. Knew my mom and from Sosnowiec. So, I mean, did you know that?

**Anita Schneider** 15:10

Yeah, but your mom was just a teenager.

**Hank Schneider** 15:12

My mother was 16 when she went into camps. My mom hid my uncle, the guy that introduced them, hid my mother behind a curtain on a ledge when five or six or seven Germans were going through the building looking for all the Jews. So my uncle was pretty shrewd guy. He knew he knew how to avoid getting picked up. He's got there were great stories. My uncle and my father told wonderful stories, but my mother hid for six months thanks to David, and then David introducing them later. What I mean? Talk about a small world?

**Jackie Congedo** 15:51

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And your mother was one of

**Hank Schneider** 15:56

six children,

**Jackie Congedo** 15:57

six children. And how many survived the war?

**Hank Schneider** 15:59

Nobody just - Oh, three of them. Three of them. I had an aunt and an uncle that both survived and the other three children, and they all wound up in Cincinnati, ultimately,

**Jackie Congedo** 16:09

wow and

**Hank Schneider** 16:09

go ahead.

**Jackie Congedo** 16:10

So let's talk about, well actually, before I get into it, at this juncture, right? We have these two people finding community and ultimately, love in the darkest

**Hank Schneider** 16:23

after the darkest time in history.

**Jackie Congedo** 16:26

Yes, and, and I'm thinking through the through the fence, I mean, in a pretty terrible environment, right? Real depravity. Did your parents ever talk about what that was like and and you know, to to be immersed in so much uncertainty and despair and the conditions, and yet they found each other in the midst of that.

**Hank Schneider** 16:53

So they went around looking for family. Didn't find anybody. They eventually found my uncle, okay, who was saved by a Russian lieutenant, and my aunt, who was pretty smart lady, she she also was in a work camp.

**Anita Schneider** 17:15

What was there? What was her courtship? Like? I mean, it's this like, it's like, it's not normal, you know, how, how did a relationship develop? You hardly spend any time together, and the conditions are are grim at best. So how did how? I think that's what she's trying to get.

**Hank Schneider** 17:32

So a couple things that I know that they told me about. One, my father had a friend, a friend. He was befriended by a soldier, so they got to spend a lot of time together. They didn't have food. My mother, during Pesach, would save her bread, because they had soup and bread, like you see in the movies, soup and bread, she would save it, and after Pesach was over, she'd go to get the bread, and it was all moldy. I mean, my father and another guy killed a horse, cut the horse up, threw the meat over the fence for the people to eat on the other side. So courtship wise, I think they were like married the minute they got together in whatever vehicle they used to get to other places to see if family was around. After they found nobody around. My father and another fella went to their town and made themselves the mayors of these two towns. Okay, the other guy lived, I don't know how far away he was the mayor of that town. My dad was the mayor of this town. They collected everything that they could that the Germans had taken, and the Germans had brought it all. So they lived a very nice they lived in a villa. They lived a very nice life. They had a dog. They had each other.

**Jackie Congedo** 18:52

Before the war,

**Hank Schneider** 18:52

no, no, this is after the war,

**Jackie Congedo** 18:54

yeah.

**Hank Schneider** 18:55

After the war, they had a car. They had a motorcycle. One day there's a knock on the door. They're there six months, and five men come to the door. It's eight o'clock at night, and my with this woman, who's like my aunt, answers the door. They're coming in. They're looking for Josel Schneider, Joseph Schneider. Who are you? We're from the police. We need Mr. Schneider. We need to talk to him. She got him drunk. My parents escaped. Okay, in the motorcycle they escaped. They went to a barn. They burned a car that was full of German marks, because they were told that if you were caught with counterfeit German marks, you would go to jail. You go to prison. They had a car trunk full of marks. They didn't know whether they were good or bad. They burned the barn with the car. They drove away in the motorcycle with the side car. They went to Germany, went to Stuttgart, and they started life [over], I guess my dad had a good job. Was doing something and then, and so they abruptly stopped these stories. Where did I learn the stories? I understood Polish till I was 27 years old. My parents didn't know. So when the refugees got together in town and they talked. I could hear, I could understand.

**Jackie Congedo** 20:26

So you, you sort of pieced this together

**Hank Schneider** 20:29

a lot of a lot of this stuff, because it was snippets,

**Hank Schneider** 20:31

yeah, of course,

**Hank Schneider** 20:32

just snippets of stuff,

**Jackie Congedo** 20:34

Wow, and so, so it's so interesting. I think that one of the challenges we live with today, still in the in the space of Holocaust education, is people think that antisemitism began, you know, somehow in the 1930s and ended with the liberation of the camps and and even when you look at the immediate aftermath, you know, you have two people who've survived the unthinkable. Hasn't the world learned its... learned its lesson? And they go back to try and pick up what pieces of life they can gather together again. And here's this, you know, the police who are looking for him motivated again, antisemitic agendas and and they're able to, once again, flee. And it's in Germany that they basically are, are looking for where to go next, right? They know they can't stay there.

**Hank Schneider** 21:27

Well, they stayed there. They went to Germany. They lived in Germany. You know, life started again for them in in and that's

**Jackie Congedo** 21:34

where you were born.

**Hank Schneider** 21:35

I was born in Stuttgart.

**Jackie Congedo** 21:36

Yeah, okay, all right. So before we continue on, Anita, I want to ask you a couple questions about, you know, when you first learn the story of because you all you know, just getting to know you you have such a beautiful relationship like you just are such wonderful compliments to each other, great partners in so many ways. And I think about how the seeds of what a beautiful relationship look like come from our parents, right so often, or from our grandparents, or people you know, who we know and we look up to. And I'm just curious, like when you learned about their their meeting and their courtship and their relationship, and having you know, been able to see that develop over time. What do you what did you make of this, of this, this history?

**Anita Schneider** 22:24

Well, before I answer, I want to say I've heard him tell this 1000 times, maybe more, and I will say that every time I hear it, it's still it still resonates, and it still has meaning, and it still has the power that it, that it had the very first time, that that never, never goes away. And I think that's a good thing.

**Jackie Congedo** 22:47

Yeah.

**Anita Schneider** 22:52

How would I describe that? My life was totally different. No family involved in the war at all in any way, shape or form. So, knowing my to be husband. Well, I knew him in high school, so we actually have known each other for a really long time, but finding out the stories was a real a real learning experience for me, because I didn't know all this stuff. I had a great Jewish education, a great Jewish background. Wasn't like I didn't know about the Holocaust. I did, but to find out intimately and eventually have that be part of my family was something that that took a lot. It wasn't it's it wasn't always easy. There was one time we went on, we took his parents on a trip, and we are in Key West, we go to a restaurant, and my mother in law takes out food, hard boiled egg and a piece of salami and some stuff. And honestly, I wanted to sink in a hole. I was so embarrassed. You know, we're in this lovely place, and she takes out food. Okay? You know, I didn't react outwardly. I'm just inside myself and thinking, what, what's with this? This is not in my... no experience like this. It wasn't until we went to Israel, the first time we went to Yad Vashem, and I saw what happens in those camps and what happens, and I finally realized when you never know when your next bite of food will will be there for you. Of course, you're going to be prepared. Of course you're going to you're going to be taking care of that kind of business, and being always secure in knowing that you have nuts in your car and crackers on hand. And you know, she was and it was like an eye opening thing for me to realize really what, what can happen to people who who lived through this kind of experience that was a really personal that was the that was the first time that it really, really hit me. Well, okay, so now, now I understand. And I grew up in a wonderful Jewish home. This had nothing to do with any of that and, and and a community wise home, I mean, but that personal experience was so eye opening for me, and it led me to treat to think of them in a different way. I was more tolerant. It just changed how I how I treated that part of my family. It's, you know,

**Jackie Congedo** 25:49

she was still living with that trauma and that, you know, the coping mechanisms that she developed just to survive. You know, it's that's not something that, like you said, you can just wash your hands when you're through that part of your life.

**Anita Schneider** 26:06

And yet, she was the person who, her English was great, not like my father in law. She was into it like, immediately. She was the powerhouse. She was the brains. She I always thought of her as sort of like, if she had had the, the opportunity to be like, sort of like Estee Lauder, I saw her in that role. You know, she could have been a CEO, because she had, she had power and she had chutzpah, and she had, she had the drive to really be a success. And I do believe that the success that your family had came from was driven by your mom. I think your dad would have been happy happy with no matter what. But she was the driving force. She was, she really was a force. Wow.

**Hank Schneider** 26:45

She was four foot 11, but she was powerful, very powerful.

**Jackie Congedo** 26:50

So she also shared in her testimony that as she got older, it got harder for her to talk about what had happened. I'm wondering, you know, Hank you talk about overhearing this, these stories and bits and pieces, was there a moment that you remember putting it all together and saying, you know, this thing I'm learning about having happened. This was my family. It happened to my family.

**Hank Schneider** 27:21

So here's the problem with all these questions. One question leads me to an answer, and then there's something else that I want to say.

**Jackie Congedo** 27:29

That's why we have a whole conversation. you this could go on. This could

**Hank Schneider** 27:33

go on for for for hours. I mean, Anita's experience. She was 41 years old. We were 41 years old when we got married. So she already had a whole life, right? I already had a whole life. And now you can pick up a new father in law, new mother in law. Okay? Who they're going to tell you what to do, just like they would their daughter, because now you're a member, and it was a stretch. Anita really. She learned a lot. This was a real... you couldn't read this in a book. Yeah, you couldn't figure out how to do this in a book. You had to be a person with tolerance and patience and understanding and thoughtfulness, because they they weren't... that part of our lives with them was not an easy

**Anita Schneider** 28:22

it wasn't always easy.

**Hank Schneider** 28:25

So what you're asking me, if I how I put it all together?

**Hank Schneider** 28:29

A lot of anger comes out because people weren't around help. People didn't extend themselves to help. People didn't know, and did know, the ones that knew didn't do anything, the ones that didn't know couldn't do anything. So I know one of the emotions that I always had was I always felt that my parents were picked on and that I was picked on as a kid. Okay, it was so important for me to be liked, not loved, but liked by everybody. So I sacrificed a lot of my life getting people to, at least in my mind, getting them to like me because I liked them. That was part, yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 28:29

Yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 29:21

part of the legacy of the history, I mean, that's all inherited, you know, from experience,

**Hank Schneider** 29:26

and that came from my dad, that came everybody loved my dad. Everybody could... my dad could sit down and talk to a cameraman or a translator or a butcher or a kid in school. He could talk to you for hours, and people would sit and they would listen to him talk for hours. His English wasn't great. It was good enough. He was not a reader. He was a hard worker. He used to say to me, you have to get your hands dirty to earn a living. So when you did something, you. To, like, sell a piece of real estate. He... didn't get your hands dirty. It just didn't sit right with him. He couldn't figure out why you should be paid for doing this. Always wanted you to have your hands into it, not just your head, into into into a job.

**Jackie Congedo** 30:18

So as he is employed first in Norwood, as you said, and then it's with Standard Textile.

**Hank Schneider** 30:27

He was working for, I think it was Globe Wernicky, was the company that made file cabinets. And then he went to Standard Textile, and then he left, and he opened a little tiny grocery store on Reading Road next to Samuel High School, the store was 14 feet wide and 100 feet deep. And one day, a guy comes in and says to him, I want to put this box in your store. The store is 14 feet wide. There's no room for the box. Says, I want to put this box here. My dad said, shows him. He says, No room. The guy says, wait here. He goes out and gets the box,

**Anita Schneider** 31:01

the freezer,

**Hank Schneider** 31:01

the freezer. The freezer, yeah. He goes out, gets the freezer. He comes back in, he puts it down, gives my dad $50 and my dad said, Okay, thank you. And he left the that was Carl Lindner.

**Jackie Congedo** 31:14

Wow.

**Hank Schneider** 31:15

Okay, when that's we found this story out later, and we arranged when they were in their 80s, they had dinner, they had lunch together. Is it was an interest, those are kind of things he went from there, from having this little grocery store, to my mother went to Europe to pick up my uncle, my aunt and two cousins. Okay? I brought him to United States...They wanted... They had to get out of this hard every day, seven, day a week, six, day a week, business. So they started selling jewelry in China. Downtown Cincinnati. Couldn't make a living. That went on for little while, and then my dad went, opened a kosher meat market.

**Jackie Congedo** 32:02

What do you think about your dad? I mean, I think about how many lives your dad had, and your mom too, but just so many chapters that were so distinct and required so much perseverance and flexibility and rebuilding. It's like rebuilding, the reinvention and rebuilding. What about your dad in terms of his character? And we talk a lot about that in our work, character strengths and what makes people uniquely equipped to sort of rise to the challenges that that you know they encounter. What do you think made your dad able to just put one foot in front of another and rebuild constantly?

**Hank Schneider** 32:41

That's a really good question. It is, you lose eight siblings and you lose a mother because the father was already gone, and you still are out there trying to make a life for yourself. I think the fact that after the war, when they were liberated, I think had my mother not been in the picture, my dad would still be, probably in Europe. He would be probably retired. Would have retired from, you know, factory work or something like that. He was never money, never drove him. He was very peaceful. He never looked back. He didn't regret. Everybody loved to agree. Everybody loved my dad. Nobody ever said anything bad about him. Never yelled at anybody other than my brother and I. Once or twice, he was just a really, really good person. He wouldn't cheat you out of a nickel Okay, and if you did something bad to him, he just, after a while, forgave you and went on.

**Anita Schneider** 33:42

He was, he had a resiliency that just kept him popping back up, but, but also, by the time you have, you know, a wife and you have a family, and they did have a nice community here. Yeah, there was a community of refugees that bonded together, and they really had that camaraderie and that safety net of each other, sometimes that sometimes that's not so good because you're you don't get out into the community to be insular, yeah, but, but that insulation at that at least in the beginning, was really comforting and and safe and they, I mean, you had social things, you know, you know, all, all of the survivors, kids, you know, they all, they all knew each other.

**Hank Schneider** 34:32

We used to visit

**Jackie Congedo** 34:32

this is the combined generations group, yes, right?

**Anita Schneider** 34:33

Yes.

**Jackie Congedo** 34:34

Came together very early on,

**Anita Schneider** 34:36

yes.

**Jackie Congedo** 34:37

And was at the end of the day the foundations of this museum, exactly, yeah, exactly,

**Hank Schneider** 34:41

go to Meadowbrook. All the families would go to Meadowbrook on Saturday, and we'd picnic there, and we'd butt into the GE employee line, and we'd have non kosher hot dogs for the first time in our lives, you know, and stuff like that. We It was a wonderful time to grow up.

**Jackie Congedo** 34:59

Wow.

**Hank Schneider** 35:00

You know, we didn't know that we didn't have anything, but we were okay. We were all okay.

**Jackie Congedo** 35:06

Anita, you know, you have really made it your mission as a couple and as a family to think about what your role is in giving back. I think you've really set such a beautiful example, not only for your family, but for so many others in the Jewish community, and more broadly, to say we're not going to wait. The moment is now and, and it's all relative, right? It's like sometimes when I think about upstanding, you know, it's easy for us as people to think about reasons why not, why we can't, why it's too hard, why? You know, doing it all feels overwhelming, but I think that particularly in challenging times, it's really stand out human beings who take it upon themselves to say, what more can I do? And I feel like, you know, you all have have done that. I'll let you just speak to that, but I also have a quote from the Gross-Rosen Memorial website, and it comes from the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which I think speaks to this. So I wonder if I'll share that in a minute, but maybe you can reflect just sort of on your What about you as a couple drives that sense of responsibility and urgency in how you go about your your life and your you know your your service

**Anita Schneider** 36:37

Well, I think as when we, when we were younger, before we had, let's, the capacity to think in financial terms, we still had the the desire and the heart to be part of community in whatever way that was, you know, as as as if all as a volunteer, as you know, there, there are millions of people who are involved, and it has nothing to do with financial capability. So I think that that's the roots of it all, is, you know, growing up in a family, and I think it doesn't matter how much you have. I think your family was the same way. If you had, you know, $1 at the end of the week, you put it in the you know, and it's an tzedakah box. My family was, was totally different, and it came to it from a whole different space, equally, well, not equally, you know, way more, but, but you know, you know, appropriately so. So I think that we started out being involved because we loved the community, and we loved sharing the the friendships and the the camaraderie and the and the feeling that it felt being together and doing doing good things, whether it was, whether it was, you know, filling bags to go to a hospital, whatever it is when we when we finally so we were inching our way up in on that financial scale, as far as our philanthropic um, idea theology was being formed, and we really were on the same page. We want. We realized, Whoa. Look, we pinch ourselves now, look, look at us. Now, who, who would have, who would have thunk it? You know? I mean, we, we just, it's, sometimes it's overwhelming to realize. I mean, it's not luck. It takes a lot of work, and it takes a lot of effort. Lot of effort, but it's look where we are now. We're so grateful. We're so appreciative. There isn't a day that go goes by. I mean, when we go out for dinner, I still say thank you. There's not a day that goes by that we don't realize how how blessed we are. I don't think we could look at each other if we didn't say now, how are we going to translate that to the world at large, to through our through our own choices, through our fan, through our children, through our grandchildren. And I think looking back from where I sit. We've been pretty successful with that, because I see this is the this is what you're trying. When you see the results of what you're doing, it is really empowering and and sustaining and fulfilling, and it just makes you feel like your life has been wonderful, but it's beyond that. It's It's It's It's,

**Anita Schneider** 39:47

we feel like we're doing important things, and it makes us feel really, really good, and we don't want to stop. We don't want to stop, because once you start on that road, it's um. Yeah, it's a road you just, you just love to be on. And don't you think that we're, we feel really satisfied, and just, it's just, it's like a thrilling thing to be able, it's so gratifying to be able to make a difference at whatever level you can. But you know, I can only speak to what we're doing. It's just, it's extremely gratifying. It makes us feel, you know, it just makes us feel wonderful. And I think, I think that the end result of the choices that we're making, I think are impactful and important.

**Hank Schneider** 40:42

Yeah, so I want to tell you something that I thought about the early question you asked me about some what some of my thoughts. I remember living in Bond Hill, and every month, my parents would send a box of stuff to people in Germany. My dad during the war, when he was in a camp, had a girlfriend before he was put into the camp, and she found out where he was, and she would throw stuff either through the fence or over the fence to my dad the whole time he was at that particular camp. And after the war, he didn't bother to go looking for her. He went looking from for my mom. But it was I, I remember those little boxes, and I remember asking him, how can you do that? How can we afford to do that? We can. We can't afford not to do that. Every month that they would send a box, a little, little box, you know, probably cost $5 then to send a box to Europe, today, you have to hire an airplane and get a loan. But then I remember that that's one of those, one of those things that jarred the memory

**Jackie Congedo** 41:56

Well, that I think, is the legacy that's that is, you know, in so many ways, the impact that you all are having with this incredible gift that your family has given to support free admission to the museum in January. You know the Anita & Hank Schneider Family Holocaust Remembrance Month initiative that we were able to launch this year where we saw just have to share with folks who are listening or watching more than 5000 people just in one month, 500 people on individual days. Incredible impact. But I think about actually, like the seeds of that gift. The seeds of that impact were born a long time ago. You know, this was the seeds of that impact were in the boxes that your dad sent back to Germany. The seeds of that impact were in the way your parents were raised before the war, and now you're sowing the seeds of that impact for your children and for your grandchildren and for their children. And so I just think it's beautiful when you share that. So again, we, we all want to say, well, I give more if I had more, or I do more if I could? Well, you can. And it doesn't matter who you are or where you are, how much you have or don't have, there's always more you can do. I'm of I'm of that mindset too, and I think you, you just beautifully live that value.

**Hank Schneider** 43:15

So you should know Anita's mom was a singer, and she traveled all around the United States raising money for

**Anita Schneider** 43:24

for Israel.

**Jackie Congedo** 43:25

Oh, did she really?

**Anita Schneider** 43:27

She was like a semi, semi pro. Oh, so that was, like her adult gig.

**Jackie Congedo** 43:32

Wow.

**Hank Schneider** 43:33

So they were very involved, yeah. And my mom was very involved with Magan David Adom. Yes, the ambulance. Yes, yes. She would, this little lady would go see big men and say, "I need a check from you." "What do you need a check for, Ellen? ""What do you need a check for, Mrs. Schneider?" "I need it for the ambulances."

**Anita Schneider** 43:52

His parents had a... on a desk, like every month they would have a stack like this, of opportunity, you know, people sending information, you know, wanting money. Even if they gave $5 they would they, I think they answered every one because that was just what they did. They it wasn't big bucks, but they felt like whatever we can do, and I think they did even to things they weren't even that connected to. They just,

**Hank Schneider** 44:20

if you came to my dad's desk when he died and cleaned out the desk, you'd find legal pads with 300 names on it, and he would send them. $18 $18 $18

**Anita Schneider** 44:31

some things we never even heard of

**Hank Schneider** 44:34

he was sending it didn't matter if it was the Easter Seals, you know, or the the SPCA, or whatever. Every year in December, he would write all these checks.

**Jackie Congedo** 44:46

Wow,

**Hank Schneider** 44:46

You remember that?

**Jackie Congedo** 44:48

So I want to ask you, sort of wrapping up our conversation about the future and thinking about your children and your grandchildren, and how do you see these seeds, this legacy of giving back, the legacy of resilience and gratitude echoing in, you know, the next generations of your family?

**Anita Schneider** 45:06

Well, first of all, I see them all across the board, as really good people, and I think being a good person will Yeah, that doesn't happen in a vacuum, and it doesn't happen just within your family. It happens through all the experiences that you have during your life. And I think being a good person and knowing who your parents and grandparents are and knowing their take on life half affects those, those generations. And I, I'm we're hopeful that that will translate into them being productive, generous, considerate, kind people in the future. I mean, that's all we can hope for, and they seem to be on the road to that our kids, we know, are already the as far as our grandchildren, they so far, it's good stuff. So remains to be seen. Well, yeah, it's a work in progress, but, but I'm really hopeful and confident that they will stand up. And, I mean, they're doing they're doing it now, each in their own ways. They're going to stand up, they're going to they're going to do what's right and forge their way in the world. And if we've made that any easier for them, then Yay. Yay for us. We've got our job, and hopefully they will, that's part of what they will remember about us.

**Hank Schneider** 46:37

So one of the things that my parents did to help us through all that is they set up a, I don't know what they call it, my dad, we gave each my brother, sister and I money in a some kind of trust, and gave our the grandchildren money, and the grandchildren have to take that money and give it to charity. I think 90% of it has to be to Jewish causes, okay? And they'll have money to do that with for a long time, all charitable money. So it when it first started, and 10 years ago, 18 years they got together in a room, and they decided we're going to do this, or we're going to do that, or we're going to do this. So they've done things as a group, a baseball field, an outdoor gym, couple other things where they've done it together, so they all get it okay, and they've all now have not only the emotional opportunity, but the physical opportunity to be generous and to give into the community.

**Jackie Congedo** 47:49

Wow. What? As we kind of close out, what is the one thing you know, you hope as people learn about your family's story, people learn about what your family today and into the future are doing for our community. What's the one thing you hope people take from from this story?

**Anita Schneider** 48:11

That every family we're no different than any other family. Every family has the potential, the capacity and the ability to be involved and they, and they should be at whatever level, whatever inspires them. Because once you do that, you'll, you'll, you'll just go on to the next thing. It's, it's very empowering and and the world will start, you know, will be a better place because of what you've done.

**Jackie Congedo** 48:42

You probably never could have imagined, Hank I mean, imagine your parents in the darkest days of their lives thinking about the future, and you and I, the three of us, having this conversation here in the middle of a beautiful museum in the heart of our city, where people come to learn that tells the story, and never in their wildest dreams, I don't think could they have imagined that this was how the story would end. What do you hope people take from that?

**Hank Schneider** 49:12

I gotta play on what Anita said, no matter how much or how little you have, okay, there's the whole idea behind the Jewish religion is to give to charity. Okay, not to go poor, go not to go broke, not to give up anything in your life, but to give to charity. And we've seen from solicitations that we've we've made, and from communications with our friends and discussions about what we've done, everybody can do something, and enough is enough, is enough, and you just have to decide when is enough enough, and then you have to take everything over enough and think about what you're going to do to leave a legacy. Because the secret here is, can't take it away. With you. You might as well leave a really good legacy, something your family for generations to come will be proud of, something that you don't mind putting your name on and being thankful while you're alive to do it so that you see the benefit, not give it away when you're dead, because you don't really receive the benefit, you don't get the joy. You don't understand how empowering and how wonderful it is to be able to do that.

**Jackie Congedo** 50:31

Thank you both so much for taking the time to be with us and sit, sit and share the story today, and we're so grateful that you're a part of our HHC family and have been for many, many, many, many years.

**Anita Schneider** 50:42

Thank you for the opportunity, and thank you for making us and enabling us to feel so it's just the happy feel. You know, it's it's this, what? This was a good thing,

**Jackie Congedo** 50:55

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