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Kristallnacht Presentation - Samuel Heider

Samuel Heider

Mark Verman

Wright State University - Main Campus, mark.verman@wright.edu

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics
Kristallnacht Commemorative Lecture

Event Information

Event date: 11/16/2015

Moderator: Mark Verman, Professor and Zusman Chair in Judaic Studies,
Department of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics

Guest Speaker Mr. Samuel Heider, Holocaust survivor

Transcript

Mark Verman: Alright, we'll get started. Welcome to all of you, and for those of you that have to stand, on one hand I'm sorry that you're being put out a bit, but on the other hand, sometimes it's good to stand, especially for important events. My name is Mark Verman, and I occupy the Zusman Chair in Judaic Studies here at Wright State for some sixteen years now, and then annually I've orchestrated an event commemorating Kristallnacht. Some of you are aware of the historical events that happened in 1938 in Germany, in November of '38, in which the Nazis and their allies destroyed hundreds of synagogues. Kristallnacht means "the night of glass", literally, "the night of broken glass". They arrested Jews that were caught in the street, a number of Jews were murdered, Jewish businesses were destroyed- it was really the start of the Holocaust. (Pause) And so each year, then, we put on a program. [Pause] And before I introduce our distinguished speaker, I'd like to first of all acknowledge the various co-sponsors of the event, all of you wouldn't have come out had it not been for the hard work of Professor Susan Carrafiello, who is the director of the Honors Program here; Dr. Ava Chamberlain, who is the chair of the Religion Department; Stephanie Bange, who directs the Frydman Holocaust- I'm sorry, the Frydman Educational Resource Center in Allyn Hall; and Renate Frydman and Tom Martin, who co-direct the Dayton Resource Center. The Dayton Resource Center a number of years ago donated its materials to the Frydman Educational Resource Center in Allyn Hall, so if you're ever doing any kind of research on the Holocaust, or if you're interested in the topic, you want to look at any of the recent movies, please take advantage of this amazing resource that we have here at Wright State. Our featured speaker this evening is Mr. Samuel Heider, who is a Holocaust survivor extraordinaire. He is in his young 90's, and as they say in Yiddish, we wish him the best of health, "Biz hundert un tsvantsik"- "May you live to be 120 years old."

Samuel Heider: Biz hundert un tsvantsik.

Mark: Yes, exactly, until 120 [*years*], which is the Biblical limit for a person's age.

Samuel: Moses.

Mark: Yeah. So, therefore potentially, you know, he could come back for another 30 times and talk to us.

Samuel: Oh, yeah. So, I still have 30 years to go, right?

Mark: Exactly, right.

Samuel: Not bad.

Mark: Usually, when I introduce the event, then I try and be very brief, but I want you to really appreciate how extraordinary it is to have Mr. Heider in our midst and willing to talk about his experiences. First of all, it's very difficult for someone like him to talk about what happened to him and his family. It really is a tremendous burden on him or any survivor to recall and re-experience the traumatic events of surviving years in these infamous concentration camps like Auschwitz and Dachau; it really takes a tremendous psychological and physical burden that we're placing upon him. And therefore, I'd like all of us to pledge to do the following, since obviously this is a free event, it's open to the public; but I'm sure that some day in the future, you'll be confronted by a Holocaust denier, by somebody that says "Oh, it never happened, you know, it's all fabricated. So what if it's written in books?" And what I'd like you to do is to be able to tell them that you know it's true, what they see, because you heard from somebody that actually was there. And so, take that seriously. (Pause) One of the reasons why it's so extraordinary that Mr. Heider is able to talk to us this evening is that he's from Poland, and in 1939, then, there were approximately 3.3 million Jews living in Poland. And of those 3.3 million, half of them perished at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust-

Samuel: More than half.

Mark: More, okay. So, in any case, some 90%, in other words, only about one out of ten Polish Jews actually survived the war. And so therefore, to have somebody who even lived until 1945, coming from Poland, is amazing. But now we're 70 years on. I mean, I can't even calculate how many of the survivors, the Polish Jewish survivors, are alive today to be able to tell the story. I've asked Mr. Heider to not only talk about his experiences during the war, but also to tell us a little about his life beforehand, because I want you to realize that survivors aren't just simply individuals that are bracketed by their wartime experience; they had lives before, they had lives afterwards, they're real people. And so that's one of the benefits of having somebody like Mr. Heider come and talk to us and share his experiences with us. After his presentation, then, he has asked to say a special prayer in Hebrew, the El Malei Rachamim, "God who is full of mercy." It's a traditional memorial prayer that's recited for the departed, and so after he speaks, he'll speak for somewhere around 50 minutes to an hour; I've told him and many times he asked me as we were preparing for tonight, "How long can I speak? Maybe I should say this, maybe I should say that," so I told him "Say whatever you want"-

Samuel: Twenty-four hours.

Mark: Twenty-four hours, okay.

Samuel: And I still wouldn't tell everything what happened to me.

Mark: Okay, so it'll take him twenty-four hours to actually get through his entire story. And, you know, we have patience, this is what we're doing this evening. So, at this point, I'd like us all to give a warm welcome to Mr. Heider.

(Applause)

Samuel: Thank you.

(Pause as Mr. Heider stands, adjusts his glasses, and moves to the podium)

Samuel: Thank you Mark for doing introduction, and welcome all of you here tonight. So, I'm gonna begin with: Ladies and gentlemen, today I'm going to speak to you about my experiences before the Holocaust and during the Holocaust. My name is Sam Heider, I was born in Poland in a small village by the name of Byakov, which is in Polish. I was the son of Jewish farmers. We were six children; three brothers, three sisters, my mother, my father. In addition to our family, there were four more Jewish families living in this particular village. All farmers, all related to each other. This in itself was very, very rare for Jews to own farmland in Poland. But in our case, this farm was passed on from generation to generation. In a way, we were very fortunate to own this farm. Being a Jew in Poland with farmland wasn't easy, and especially for me. I was the only Jewish boy in school. I would get up six o'clock in the morning, run five kilometers, so I would be the first one in school, so I wouldn't get beat up by my schoolmates. But on the way home, they made up for it. Growing up as a Jewish boy in Poland, in a small village, I didn't quite understand the word "anti-Semite" or calling me "Żyd," "Jew." And when I asked my father, "Why do the Polish children call me Jew?" he said "Don't think nothing of it. You are Jewish, that's why they call you Jew." However, they call me "Jew" for anti-Semitic reason. But, in spite of the physical and verbal abuse we endured, Jews in Poland lived a happy and very traditional Jewish life. Jews lived in Poland for generations, and Jews kept multiplying until the Jewish population reached 3.5 million. In a country of 35 million Poles, every tenth person in Poland was Jewish; nowhere in the world would have 10% being Jewish. Jews in Poland built a tremendous amount of synagogues, the most famous rabbis, cantors, in the world. Jews had the same rights as the Poles. Jews served in the Polish army, including my father, who served in the World War I, and my brother in World War II. Even in small towns and villages such as ours, with only four Jewish families, we lived a happy and a very traditional Jewish life. However, life in Poland changed when Marshalek Józef Pilsudski passed away in 1935. After Pilsudski passed away, anti-Semitism in Poland spread more than before his death. In 1936, a pogrom broke out in a small town by the name of Przytyk. The Jews of Przytyk put up a courageous fight, which the Poles didn't expect. They dismantled all the horses, broke up

all the wagons, and the Poles begged the Jews to let them go home. And Przytyk became known all over the world; the Jews of Przytyk became heroes. My mother had a brother in Przytyk by the name of Hochenbaum [?]; although he lost an eye, but he was proud of his accomplishment. However, the Jewish victory in Przytyk didn't stop anti-Semitism. As for us, we remained on the farm until 1941...(Pause)...when our house and our farm was taken away from us because we were Jewish, and given to two brothers by the name of Rogarsky, and we were sent to the ghetto in a nearby little town, Bialobrzegi [?], [in] Polish. From the beginning, we had plenty to eat because we brought some food with us, and we helped a lot of people from starvation. But after a few months, we experienced hunger like everyone else. We had to live off what we received from the Judenrat, the Jewish community. This was one loaf of bread for eight of us; my mother would divide the bread into eight pieces, and most of the time [Mr. Heider's voice falters slightly as he finishes the sentence] she didn't leave a piece for herself. Until one day, my younger brother, by the name of Slolek [?] asked for another piece of bread. My mother said, "Mein kind, my child, I don't have any more bread." And my brother started to cry, and I was crying, so I said to myself "Tonight I will escape from the ghetto. I cannot take this anymore." That night I went over to my mother and said "Mom, tonight I'm going to escape from the ghetto. I'm going to the Zandomirjs. [?]" The Zandomirjs [?] were a good Christian Polish family. Then my mother said, "To the Zandomirjs [?]? With all the Gestapo and SS staying there?" So I said to my mother, "Mom, this might be the least expected place they will think a Jew would hide." The reason is because the Zandomirjs [?] had a restaurant and a store, so the Gestapo and the SS, and Schlozak [?] is from Silesia on the border with Germany, and they also spoke Polish and German; they [the Gestapo and SS, presumably] would eat and sleep there. Before the war, my family leased the store from them, and so we were very good friends with them. For me it was very risky, but I took the chance. So that night I went over to my mother and said goodbye, and my mother said "My child, be very careful." Then I went over to my father, and I said goodbye, and my father said "May God be with you." And then I went Zandomirjs [?]. Around four o'clock in the morning, I crossed the river and I knocked on the window. Mrs. Zandomirj [?] let me in and I said, "I would like for you to keep me here." She took me in with open arms, and she said "I will keep you here and protect you with everything I can, and from now on your name will be Janik [?]. You will be my sister's son, my nephew." So the first morning we were eating breakfast, and two Gestapo came in. They noticed me, they looked at each other and Mrs. Zandomirj [?] said "This is my nephew Janik [?]. He'll be with us this summer helping in the fields." So from then on, my name was Janik [?], a common Polish name. While being by [the] Zandomirjs [?], my family had plenty to eat; their son, by the name of Jhijack [?] would prepare twice a week packages for me to take home. Nobody knew what he was doing, except him and me. Jhijack [?] was a good friend of mine, we went to school together. This went on for a long time. Until one day, we were in the fields, and it was very hot. And the Zandomirj's [?] daughter by mistake called out my Jewish name, Schmulek, in the presence of a Gestapo. She said "Schmulek, przynieś wodę" in Polish, which means "Bring some water." So the Gestapo immediately asked "Who is Schmulek?" I didn't have any choice but to say "I am Schmulek." He then ordered everyone to the side, took out a gun, and was ready to shoot me. So Mrs. Zandomirj [?] at the last moment, she jumped in front of me and said to the Gestapo "You'll have to kill me first before you kill

him.” After ignoring several warnings and not moving, the Gestapo yelled out “He’s a Jew!” So Mrs. Zandomirj [?] said, “He’s my son!” He finally promised her he wouldn’t kill me; she saved my life by risking her own. In our village there were ten Jewish...Jews hidden by a Polish family by the name of Korovsky, all relatives of mine, all cousins; they all survived the war. We must not forget those righteous Polish people; they risked their lives by hiding Jews, and a lot of Jewish children. They deserve a lot of praise and recognition. It is unfortunate there were not more righteous gentiles who could have saved a lot more Jews. But from then on, I didn’t feel safe with the Gestapo being around. And when my mother found out what happened, she ordered me to come home immediately. So I went back to the ghetto. After being a short time in the ghetto, there was a roundup of Jews to be sent to a concentration camp in Radom, Poland. I was walking with my younger brother when a Jewish policeman, my own cousin by the name of Nozeg [?] grabbed me and put me in a truck to be sent to the concentration camp in Radom. So I asked him, “Nozeg [?], why are you sending me to a concentration camp? You are my cousin!” And he said, “I WAS your cousin.” In some cases, the Jewish police were worse than the Gestapo. So my brother ran home and told my mother what happened. She came running and crying, “Mein kind! Mein kind! My child! My child! Only God knows if I’ll ever see you again! This was August of 1942. I was 17 years old, and after that [Mr. Heider’s voice begins to break in sadness as he finishes the sentence] I never saw my mother or my whole family again. And I was sent to Radom to a munition factory. We were making guns for the Germans, so they could kill Jews. After being just a few days in Radom, there was an assembly. The SS asked us who was 30 years of age. They said they had a special treat for us. Eight boys came forward, and the SS hung all 8 of them- this was the greeting we received in Radom. A few days later, a Jewish policeman called me in a special room with two of my friends, and each one of us received twenty-five whips. We were accused of stealing a piece of bread. Two weeks later, the same Jewish policeman called me in again and said, “You are not producing enough.” He then told an SS officer to give me another twenty-five whips. After about five or six whips, the Jewish policeman took the whip and said “Give it to me. I will show you how to give lashes.” This was after being only a month in Radom. Then in late September of 1942, on a Sunday afternoon, a distant relative of mine, Abe Flekhe, came running to me with tears in his eyes and said “Schmulek, we’ll never see our families again! [Mr. Heider’s voice again begins to break as he continues] The whole ghetto was liquidated! And, oh, perhaps as many as 8,000 men, women, and children, together with my whole family, were sent to the gas chambers of Treblinka!” After receiving the tragic news of my family, I was crying and crying, until there were not more tears in my eyes. I cannot understand why the Jews of Bialobrzegi [?] didn’t put up a fight. A handful of SS led 8,000 men, women, and children, where they walked 25 miles, 25 kilometers, to the nearest railroad station where they were packed in cattle cars, 60 people to a car, on the way to the gas chambers of Treblinka. They walked through thick forest and bushes and small villages, and no one tried to escape. If they would only dismantle some of the SS, and kill some of them, perhaps some of them could escape into the forest. We are partially to blame ourselves, for not putting up a fight; but instead, they went to the gas chambers of Treblinka, with the Shema Yisrael on their lips. So at that point I decided I didn’t want to live any longer. Why should I live when there’s nobody left from my family? All that’s left of my family is a picture of my oldest sister Leah [?]. I am 17 years

old and I don't have... [Mr. Heider chokes back tears] ...I don't have anybody left in this world. I lost my whole family; three sisters, two brothers, my mother, my father, and my nephew. Out of a family of nine, I am the only survivor. So at that point, I decided I would escape from the concentration camp, even though I knew I would be caught and the SS would kill me. So one Saturday night, I tried to escape, and a Jewish policeman captured me. The next day, Sunday morning, he started kicking and beating me, and I was bleeding all over. And at the same time, the camp doctor happened to come, to walk by, and he asked this policeman "What happened?" And the Jewish policeman said, "This so-and-so, he tried to escape from the camp, but I captured him and I am turning him over to the SS." So the doctor asked the policeman where I was from, and he said "This so-and-so, he is from Bialobrzeg [?]." God must have told me to say "I am not from Bialobrzeg [?], I am from the village of Byakov." So the doctor said "From Byakov?" And I said yes. So he asked me my name; in the concentration camps, we didn't have a name, we only had a number. So I said "My haftrink [?] number is 424. So the doctor said, "No, what is your REAL name?" And I said "Heider." And the doctor said "Heider? Oh my God, I know the whole family! What happened to your family?" I told him I lost my whole family, they were sent to the gas chambers of Treblinka. So he begged the policeman not to turn me over to the SS. He said, "Let's take him in to the Jewish Chief of Police." So he took me in and told him what happened. Then the police chief said, "Punish him in a different way. Don't turn him over to the SS. Give him twenty-five whips instead." So my body carries seventy-five whips. He then let me go. I remained in Radom until 1944. In 1944 the Russian army kept advancing in Poland, and the concentration camp in Radom was liquidated, and we were sent to Auschwitz. After marching on a death march for a week, in which many of us died, we were put on a train to Auschwitz. When we arrived in Auschwitz, we couldn't believe our own eyes. We were greeted with a beautiful orchestra and a big sign that said "Arbeit macht frei.", which means "Work makes free." After a while, we were given a half a loaf of bread. So we said to ourselves, "This cannot be Auschwitz." But this was German psychology- they would give us bread in the morning, and send us to the gas chambers in the evening. The same day, we went through a selection, facing the angel of death, Josef Mengele, waiting for him to decide whether I should live or be put in the gas chambers. Standing five in a row for a long time, and waiting for his decision. He finally came to my row, and he looked at me straight in my eyes for about 5 seconds or so, with my arms up halfway. Had he ordered me to raise my arms up a little higher, I would have had to drop the only picture of my sister, which I managed to save all those years under my arm, going through several selections, including Auschwitz, and even going into showers, going in one door and coming out another, I still managed to save the picture until this day. As I said, Mengele looked my straight in my eyes, and I kept pinching my cheeks to make myself look healthy; and he motioned me to the right. Had he motioned me to the left, I wouldn't be here today. After the selection in Auschwitz I was sent to a German air force base in Hesselthal, the Luftwaffe. So for the first week or so, we ate apples on the trees and begged bread from the German air force men. But then a few days, the SS took over the camp. While being in Hesselthal, one winter morning, there was a lot of snow and it was very cold. And I refused to go out for the apel [roll call]. The Jewish policeman started beating me and kicking me and said "You have to go out for the apel." I begged him, "Please let me stay in the barrack. I don't have any shoes." But he refused my

begging. So I went, I waited until the last minute and I ran out barefooted, in the snow, in front of the Oberscharführer (Senior Squad Leader). I kept changing my feet so they wouldn't freeze, and the Oberscharführer asked me, "Where are your shoes?" And I said, "Herr Oberscharführer, I don't have any shoes. They are torn to pieces." He then ordered the Jewish policeman to give me shoes immediately. I took a chance, and it worked. And from then on, I remained in the camp. In this camp, Hessenthal, an epidemic broke out, and I was struck with the deadly disease typhus. Very few survived the typhus; I was among the few who survived. If it wasn't for a distant relative of mine, Abe Flekhe, only God knows if I would have survived. Abe Flekhe was also stricken with the typhus. And when I begged for a little water, Abe, as sick as he was, he virtually threw himself down from the bunk and gave me some water, even though the doctors said "It's no use to give him any water. He cannot live any longer. It's just a matter of minutes." After he gave me a little water, I started to feel a little bit better. And by still being sick with the typhus, the camp in Hessenthal was liquidated in 1945, due to the approach of the American army. And the minute we left the camp, American pilots bombed the train. And I was then put in a horse and wagon, and after a few days we were forced to walk again on a death march. Many of us died during the march. I myself couldn't walk any longer because I was still very sick, so I lied down and was waiting to be shot from the SS, when along came Abe Flekhe, and again he saved my life. He picked me up and said "Hang on to me. I'm not going to let you die here." He dragged me for a while, and then he too collapsed, and finally we were put on a train to Dachau. In Dachau we didn't work, facing starvation, and were just waiting to be sent to the gas chambers. While being in Dachau, we witnessed American planes flying overhead on the way to Munich, to bomb Munich, Germany. We prayed they would drop some bombs on the camp- we would have rather died from American bombs than from a German bullet. But our prayers were not answered- they just kept flying to Munich. We could see the smoke and hear the explosions, because Munich was only seven kilometers from Dachau. The only reason I survived Dachau was because I was only there for a short time. Although I was only a short time, I experienced the most inhumane conditions. In Dachau, in order to go out to get some watery soup, we had to climb over piles of dead bodies; and we didn't know if the smell was from the soup or from the dead remains of the people. As for my experience, when I first went to get the soup, I asked for a piece of potato, which I couldn't find in my soup. And a Jewish kapo hit me over the head, and I had to drop the soup. And then when I tried to pick up whatever was left on the ground, he smashed it with his shoes. Therefore, many, many times I didn't go for the soup. And I didn't care if I would live or if I would die. Life was meaningless, and there was no hope of survival. I lived most of the time eating the piece of bread... [He switches pages again, and loses his place briefly, finding it again with help from Mark.] ...we received each day. [Smiling at the audience, he says "At my age, I cannot see so good."] There was only one pound of bread for eight people. After being a short time in Dachau, we were again forced to leave the camp and put on a train in cattle cars, 60 people to a car, with no food, no water, and no sanitary facilities. It was standing room only. And the smell of the human waste was almost impossible. Many of us died on the train. After leaving Dachau, with no place to go, just going back and forth, and finally we were liberated on the train on April 30, 1945. And now, I would like to describe life in the concentration camps. We would get up six o'clock in the morning, rain or shine, we would wait for two hours until everybody

was accounted for. We would then go to work and return to the barracks at six o'clock in the evening, and sometimes later. We went through the same routine every day, with no hope of a better tomorrow. We lived like animals; no sanitary facilities, no hot water, no showers, no shirts, no underwear, just a camp uniform. In one particular camp, Hesselthal, we didn't have a shower for three months. The lice would eat us up alive. I had a shirt, but the more I washed it, the more lice appeared- even the lice liked clean. I wore it for three years; all that was left was shredded pieces. No one of us would think of survival; we just lived from day to day, or from minute to minute. Our daily living consisted of a piece of bread and soup. When we received a piece of bread and the soup, we only hoped to find a piece of potato at the bottom. Most of the time there was nothing but cloudy water; this had to last us twenty-four hours. When we received our piece of bread, there was always a discussion; should you eat up the piece of bread and wait twenty-four hours, or should you save it until morning and hope that nobody would steal it from you during the night. And those who deny that the Holocaust ever happened, I only wish it should have been them in Auschwitz and Dachau instead of me; I wonder if they would still deny the Holocaust. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am asking the world, including the United States of America and the Jewish community in America; why didn't they demonstrate twenty-four hours a day in front of the White House, demanding from President Roosevelt to intervene on behalf of the Jews in Europe, knowing that Hitler and the Nazis are killing Jews by the millions. In the meantime, Hitler and Himmler were planning the Final Solution of the Jewish problem. So, they started to build ghettos, concentration camps, and crematoriums where six million Jewish people perished because the world kept silent. Although many other nationalities suffered tremendously, no one suffered as the Jews. Among the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, one and a half million Jewish children cried out from the ashes of Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka. They ask "Why? What have we done? We are children, just like any other children! We don't have the right to live because we are Jewish?" They kept asking why, and sadly there is no answer. And where was God? We are supposed to be the chosen people. But perhaps even God doesn't know the answer, or there is no answer. It should be a tragic lesson learned, never to be forgotten. In their names I am asking you, ladies and gentlemen, to observe Yom HaShoah, the Day of Remembrance, מְדוֹר לְדוֹר ["me-dor le-dor" in Hebrew], "from generation to generation," so that their names shall never be forgotten. Let the one and a half million Jewish children know that you will keep up their memories forever. I recently spoke about the grandparents. Most of the Holocaust survivors lost their parents, including myself. Therefore, our children never had grandparents. It is the most painful answer when a child asks "Where are my grandparents? Why don't they come to visit us? Where are they?" How do you explain to a child that your grandparents will never come to visit you? All that's left of your grandparents are ashes from the crematoriums of Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka, and others. And as painful as it is, you have to tell your children what happened to their grandparents. And by telling our children and grandchildren, perhaps we can prevent another Holocaust. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I am asking the German people, who witnessed the Kristallnacht of November 10, 1938, the Night of the Broken Glass. Hundreds of Jews were killed during the Kristallnacht; they witnessed the destruction of Jewish synagogues, the burning of Jewish prayer books, the destruction of Jewish properties. The German people knew in

1933 that Hitler hated Jews. But as long as they kept killing Jews, the United States and the rest of the world kept silent; including Pope Pius XII, the most influential pope. He should have intervened to Mussolini on behalf of the Jews. Perhaps he could have some influence on Hitler. But he also chose to be silent. Had they not been silent, perhaps six million Jews would not have perished during the Holocaust. After the Kristallnacht, some Jews escaped Germany. Some of them came to the United States; some families came to Dayton, Ohio, like the Apels [?] and the Mays [?] who settled in Dayton. Some Jews from Germany came to our village, and they told us what Hitler is doing to the Jews; he's killing Jews for no reason whatsoever, just because they were Jewish. And now ladies and gentlemen, as we observe the 70th year of the liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany, and especially the liberation of concentration camps including Dachau, where I was liberated from on April 30, 1945. When I look back 70 years ago, I keep asking myself "Is this a dream? How did I survive 5 years in ghettos and concentration camps, starving from hunger, barely surviving on a tiny piece of bread and a little bit of watery soup?" Going through an operation without anesthesia, on a Sunday at 6 am in the morning, when the SS were still asleep, taping my mouth shut so I couldn't cry or scream, and only God could feel my pain [Mr. Heider's voice cracks as he says this]. It was a miracle of miracles that I survived those five years. I could never have dreamed that I would be here 70 years later at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, in the USA, telling my story to you, ladies and gentlemen. [Mr. Heider reaches for his water] I'm going to get a little schnapps. [Crowd chuckles as Mr. Heider drinks]. And although I survived the Holocaust, the images from the piles of dead bodies and the sadistic smiling face of Josef Mengele and other... [Mr. Heider, wrestling with emotions, pauses, then continues shakily] and other images will remain with me for the rest of my life. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming and for sharing with me just a small part of my life during the Holocaust. And on behalf of the Holocaust survivors around the world, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the American army, the British army, and the Russian army for liberating us from slavery in Nazi Germany. And thank you all for keeping up the memories of the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust. And a special thanks to Mark Verman for making all the arrangements for my being here. I'd like to conclude with these words; as long as the gates to Yisrael are open, the doors to the crematoriums are going to be closed forever. And in the memories of the six million Jewish people who perished during the Holocaust, including one and a half million Jewish children, let us just say these two words: never again. They'll hear our voices, and they'll sleep in peace. Thank you, and may God bless you.

[Crowd applauds, as Mark hands Mr. Heider a tallit (?), as Mr. Heider prepares to give a prayer]

Mark: So Mr. Heider is going to say a memorial prayer, and then afterwards there will be a question and answer period, and we'll have an open discussion with him.

[Pause while Mark helps Mr. Heider sort through his papers. Mr. Heider drinks from his cup of water again.]

Samuel: One schnapps didn't do it. Have to have another. [Turns to Mark] L'Chaim [to life].

Mark: L'Chaim

Samuel: "L'Chaim" means "to life." [Pause as Mr. Heider readjusts his glasses] I'm getting old, I cannot see. Ladies and gentlemen, before I make this special prayer, El Malei Rachamim [God who is full of mercy] for the six million for the six million Jewish people who perished during the Holocaust. It has been 70 years ago, on April 30, 1945, and I was liberated from Dachau. I'll describe exactly how it all began. On April 23, 1945, around six o'clock in the morning, the Jewish police and the kapos started to chase us out from the barracks, yelling "Rouse! Rouse!" and we assembled at the railroad station. After receiving a piece of bread and some ersatz coffee, substitute coffee, we were pushed in cattle cars, sixty people to a car, with no food, no water, and no sanitary facilities, and just waiting to move. And by still being on the train, with the doors still open, out of nowhere American pilots flying over the train, almost touching the roofs, and starting to bomb. They bombed the locomotive, unable it to move, and also shooting with machine guns and killing a lot of SS, and also killing the commander of the train. He was assigned to take us all to the mountains and to dynamite the whole transport, the whole train, with no survivors, and as we learned later on. But as we always lived with miracles, this was a miracle of miracles, that the commander was killed, because the other commander who took over the transport saved our lives by diverting the train in another direction, and just going back and forth. And after travelling five days, and the smell of the human waste was just unbearable, we finally stopped in a place called Stalta. And while we were still on the train, a day before the liberation, I was very skinny, I only weighed 75 pounds. So, I managed to squeeze myself from the railroad car and I walked into a house nearby, hoping to get a piece of bread. When I walked in, an SS officer was sitting and he was eating a piece of bread with milk. When I noticed the officer, I raised my arms and excused myself, and I said [it] in German, and I was ready to leave. So the officer said "Don't be afraid, come, sit down," and told the lady to get the boy a piece of bread. And I said again, "Thank you, please let me go." But the SS officer said again, "Don't be afraid, sit down." So I sat down and I was eating a piece of bread and drinking some milk, some hot milk. So I said to myself, "Am I dreaming? I am sitting with an SS officer by the same table." And as we were sitting he said to me, "Tomorrow you are going to be liberated. You are going to be free. The Americans are seven kilometers from here." So I finished eating and I got up and I thanked him and the lady, and I was ready to leave. So the lady gave me another piece of bread, and she kept looking at me and said "Gott, mein Gott [God, oh My God]...how could they do this to human beings?" And when I was ready to leave, the SS officer said "Come with me," and we walked out from the house. He took out a razor blade and told me to cut off his SS insignia, and I did so, and I squeezed myself back into the railroad car, and I told everyone what happened, that we will be liberated tomorrow. No one would believe me; "He is crazy, he doesn't know what he is talking [about]! He must be dreaming!" And they said, "You were sitting with an SS officer, by the same table? Are you out of your mind? What are you talking [about]?" And he told you that tomorrow we're going to be free, we'll be liberated?" No one would believe me. And the conversation was going on almost the whole night. And

around 9:30 in the morning, on April 30, 1945, we hear a tremendous rumbling, and the rumbling became louder and louder, and one of us said in Polish, “To sa czotgi!” “Those are tanks!” And about the same time, we were ordered out of the train and not to move. We didn’t know what to make out of this. And after a while, we saw a lot of tanks on the nearby highway. A few tanks turned in our direction. The closer they came, one of us started yelling in Yiddish, “Americane! Americane!” “Americans! Americans!” The most beautiful sound I ever heard. And about the same time, a young soldier, and perhaps ten others, came from behind one of the tanks. And as he approached us with a little machine gun and said in broken German, “Du habt keine angst. Du bist frei.” “Don’t be afraid. You are free.” Those words will remain with me for the rest of my life. In the early hours after the liberation, I was like in a dream. After five years of slavery, I was really free; after five years of [the most] inhumane conditions mankind has ever known, I am really free. It is a miracle of miracles that I am here today. [Pauses] Gonna get another schnapps. [Takes a drink of water]. And now ladies and gentlemen, please rise for the prayer, the El Malei Rachamim.

[Everybody stands up, and Mr. Heider begins the prayer]

Samuel: [*translated from Hebrew*]

O God, full of compassion, You who dwellest on high! Grant perfect rest beneath the sheltering wings of Your presence, among the holy and pure who shine as the brightness of the firmament unto the souls of those who have gone unto eternity. Lord of mercy, bring them under the cover of Your wings, and let their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life. Be You their possession, and may their repose be peace, Amen.

[Prayer ends at 1:00:32. Marks asks everyone to be seated, removes Mr. Heider’s his tallit [prayer shawl].

Mark: So now we’ll open it up to questions, and you can ask Mr. Heider for further clarification about his experiences, his thoughts about the Holocaust.

Samuel: Any questions?

Audience member: Yeah, I had a question. So, I kind of read up on your story prior to this, and I read that you kept your sister’s picture even, like, in the shower and everything, and you mentioned multiple times throughout this that you kind of lost hope and that you had no hope. Yeah, I’m confused; like, I don’t believe that because you held on to this picture for so long, so what was the reason behind that? You held a picture of your sister but you felt so hopeless.

Samuel: Well, this was the only picture what I had from my family. And like I said, I managed to hide the picture under my arms all those years. And to be honest with you, there was no hope of survival- we only lived from day to day or from minute to minute. We never believed that we would survive, no one of us.

Mark: Other questions? Yeah, please, in the back.

Audience member: What was your life like after? How did you start your life- What did you do after the Holocaust?

Samuel: After the Holocaust, after I was liberated, I was sent to an *aholungslage* [?], which means like a sanatorium. I was sent to this camp by the name of Lagestein. And three Russian girls were assigned to take care of me twenty-four hours a day, because I was very, very frail; like I said, I only weighed 75 pounds. They cooked for me, they bathed me, they looked out for me. They made special, special meals, and most of them were with milk, so I wouldn't eat any meat or anything else until I recuperated. As a matter of fact, after three months, I was in this camp, this Lagestein, for three months. And in August of 1945, I was sent to a DP camp, a displaced person camp, in Germany, by the name of Landsbergh am Lech. By the way, the same camp, the same city, where Hitler was imprisoned, [after his failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923] and the same city, Landsbergh am Lech, where he wrote his book *Mein Kampf*. He wrote the book for a thousand-year Reich, as maybe some of you read the book. And he almost succeeded.

Mark: So why don't you tell us a little bit more about what happened after you were sent to the DP camp?

Samuel: In 1945 I came, like I said, in August 1945, and I was from 1945 until 1950. In 1950, I was sent through the HIAS, the Jewish organization, I was sent to the United States of America, and they sent me to Dayton, Ohio, and we lived in Dayton, Ohio ever since. And this is how I spent the five years after the concentration camp.

Mark: Your wife was also a Holocaust survivor. How did you meet? Tell us a little about her story too.

Samuel: After 1945, I was looking for a Jewish girl. [Crowd chuckles]. To be honest with you, where I was, there was no Jewish girls. I found out, in a town, Bergen-Belsen, it was a concentration camp, I found out there were a lot of Jewish girls in this camp. Unfortunately, my wife passed away not too long ago. I met my wife in this camp in Bergen-Belsen, on a Saturday night. I went to a dance, and there were a lot of girls, and I noticed my wife- I called her Fela, because this was her Polish name- and I approached her, and I looked at her; she had long dark hair, dark eyes, she was so beautiful. So I walked over to her and I said in Yiddish, in Jewish, "Would you like to dance?" And she said in Polish, "I don't understand Jewish." So I said, "Alright, I'll speak to you [in] Polish." And I asked her in Polish if she would like to dance. And she said, "I don't know how to dance." So I said, "Don't worry, I don't know either." [Crowd and Mr. Heider laugh]. So, and then I spent with her some times and I asked her if she would like to go with me to Landsbergh and stay with me. This was in 1945. She agreed to go back with me to Landsbergh, and in 1946 we got married, in Landsbergh, and our son was born in 1947 in Germany. And in 1950, we came to the United States of America, to the land of freedom. This is how I met my wife.

Mark: Thank you for sharing that. There's a question in the back for you Sam.

Audience member: Do you have the picture of your sister still?

[Mr. Heider turns to Mark, as he didn't hear]

Mark: Do you still have the picture of your sister?

Samuel: Absolutely, yeah, until this day. I made a big, big frame, and I also have the little picture which I saved. This was taken in 1936, before the war. Yes, I still have the picture.

Mark: Yeah, there's a question here for you, in the front.

Audience member: Do you just have the one son, and do you have any grandchildren?

Samuel: Yes, Ken Ohara [?] [Crowd chuckles]. I have five grandchildren. I have two daughters and my son which was born in Germany, and I have five grandchildren, and one of them is twins, twin boys. They work in Columbus for Honda, they're engineers. So I'm blessed with five grandchildren. Biz hundert un tsvantsik [until 120 years].

Same audience member: What kind of work did you do when you came to Dayton?

Samuel: That's a big story. [Mr. Heider, Mark, and the crowd all laugh]. When I came to Dayton, I didn't speak a word of English. So I, eh, I knew a little bit [of] tailoring, so the Jewish community asked me, what do I know? I said, "I think I know some tailoring." So he took me in to the Metropolitan, at that time, Metropolitan Clothing Store. And I was there for five years, and I worked for Metropolitan. And after five years, I went into the business for myself, and I was in the junk business, collecting scrap. I went out with a truck, which I paid \$210 for it, and most of the time I had to push it. [Mr. Heider and the crowd chuckle]. Going down the hill was alright, but going up the hill it refused to go. [More chuckling]. So, and I built up a business in Dayton, Ohio and then in Florida too. And I remained in the junk business until I was forced to sell it because of my health. And I gave up the business when I got sick. I had three bypasses; I still have the defibrillators, four defibrillators. That's why I cannot walk so good, because I don't have no circulation in my legs. Now, this was my business when I come to Dayton, Ohio. [Mr. Heider smiles].

Mark: Other questions?

Audience member: Can I make a comment? It wasn't the junk business. It sounds, junk business sounds good. He was in the metal salvage business-

Samuel: No, recycling!

[Crowd, Mark, and Mr. Heider laugh]

Same audience member: Metal recycling business, and he knew what he was doing.

Samuel: And you want to know something? If somebody asked me, what am I? I said, I am a M.D.- metal doctor.

Mark: Metal doctor?

[Everyone laughs]

Mark: Okay, yeah, thanks for that comment. There was a question...oh, okay, in the back.

Audience member: What are all the languages you speak?

Samuel: Me? Let's see...Polish, Jewish, German, Russian, Hungarian. Five languages.

Same audience member: And English

Mark: Oh, you forgot English.

Samuel: I did?

Mark: Yeah, yeah, so that's six!

[Everyone laughs]

Samuel: But I don't speak good English!

Mark: Oh, you don't speak good English. Your English is fine.

Samuel: You think so?

Mark: Yeah, absolutely, we can all understand you.

Samuel: Well, I went to school. When I came here to Dayton I went to night classes. And after six months or so I went to high school here, for about maybe two weeks or so, and I said to myself, "In high school I cannot make a living." [Everyone laughs]. I was 21 yeah? Let's see [starts counting on his hand] twenty four, twenty five... [Mr. Heider chuckles]

Mark: Um, oh, there's another question up here.

Audience member: Do you ever worry about it happening again?

Samuel: Many, many times. Let's face it, what's going on now in the world, including Iran, we hope and pray that history doesn't repeat itself. Because we trusted Hitler too,

and what happened? After six years, in September 1939, he invaded Poland. After he invaded he invaded Poland, he occupied most of Europe. And then in 1941, although he had a pact with Stalin, in 1941 he invaded Russia too. And we hope that history doesn't repeat itself. We pray to God.

Mark: Perhaps we can have one final question, and then if you want you can come up and talk to Mr. Heider as well. Yeah?

Audience member: What can we do to prevent it from happening again?

Mark [repeating for Mr. Heider]: What can we do to prevent another Holocaust, another genocide?

Samuel: We have to speak about the Holocaust! Not only to you; to your children, and to your grandchildren! And like I said, there's talking to the younger generation; you are the ones who can prevent the Holocaust! It should never happen again. God forbid, God forbid. Not only six million Jews perished, but 20 million Russians perished too, during the war. 700,000 Jews were deported from Russia to concentration camps.

Mark: I want to thank all of you for coming, it's been a marvelous evening, and let's give a warm thanks to Mr. Heider.

[Mark and the crowd start applauding. Audience begins filing out.]

Samuel: Thank you.

Mark: Oh, it was wonderful, truly wonderful!

Audience member (unnamed, but clearly knows Mr. Heider personally): It's good to see you Sam.

Samuel: Yeah, good to see you. Let me give you a hug, I didn't see you for such a long time.

Same audience member: Yeah, I know.

Samuel: Yeah, yeah, I'm so happy to see you.

Another audience member: Greets Mr. Heider in Hebrew: "kol ha-kavod" [well done].

Samuel: Responds to the audience member, in Hebrew "mah nishma" [what is new with you?].

[Video ends]