**United States Holocaust Memorial MuseumPRIVATE**

**Interview with Max Liebster**

**February 5, 1991**

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**MAX LIEBSTER**

**February 5, 1991**

INTERVIEWER: We're in France. And this is the town of --

MR. LIEBSTER: (IX LEE BECK).

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. And the person we're interviewing is Max Liebster. Would you please give us your full name.

MR. LIEBSTER: Liebster, Max. First name is Max. I was born in Germany. In Wiesbaden, in Hesse, near Frankfurt am Main, in February 15, 1915. I am now 75 years; and in two weeks, I will be 76.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Would you please tell us the name of your mother and your father.

MR. LIEBSTER: My mother is Betta, born Oppenhiemer. And my father is (BEN HA) Liebster. He was born near the Polish border, in Germany. Near the Polish border.

INTERVIEWER: Would you please tell us the name of your brothers and your sisters.

MR. LIEBSTER: I have two sisters. One in Florida, in the States; Ida Boushammom. And one in Argentina. She has died already. Her name was Hanna Strauss.

INTERVIEWER: And who is the oldest in the family?

MR. LIEBSTER: Ida. She's in Florida; Ft. Lauderdale, she lives.

INTERVIEWER: I see. All right. Would you tell us the type of work your father did. What was was his occupation?

MR. LIEBSTER: My father was repairing shoes, repairing shoes for men and women.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And did your mother have an occupation or was she a housewife?

MR. LIEBSTER: No. Only a housewife. She took care of the house.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Very good. What type of education did you receive when you were a young person?

MR. LIEBSTER: I was eight years in the school, common school, next to our house. And then I got into business in '29. I was in the clothing business in Pforzheim, near Mannheim, for ten years, until the war was broken out in 1939. And there I was going out and wanting to get shoes and send them to the concentration camp. So I went to the Black Forest and Pforzheim. And there I was put in prison.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MR. LIEBSTER: In September '39.

INTERVIEWER: All right. So before this happened though, you evidently come from a Jewish background.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. Raised in the Jewish family. My grandfather Oppenheimer was (WHICHE), meaning he was killing the animals kosher for the Jewish faith.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Okay.

MR. LIEBSTER: Butcher, as you call it in English.

INTERVIEWER: Let's go back to the year 1933, when Hitler first came to power. What was the feeling among the Jewish community?

MR. LIEBSTER: We were all afraid every time we hear that some were taken into concentration camp. And most of them came back dead; sent ashes and got buried. Only ashes they sent back from the crematorium. And the Jewish people -- Like I was a young man. I was put in the concentration camp. I was 24. Around 20 years we couldn't go to the cenima. It was written, Jewish people has no right to come in. The dancing places. We couldn't relax ourselves as youths. As Jewish people, we were everywhere pushed out.

INTERVIEWER: In your particular community how many Jewish people were there, approximately? Can you recall that?

MR. LIEBSTER: In Pforzheim, we were twenty families. Twenty families. Jewish families.

INTERVIEWER: At that time what was going through your mind about the way the Jewish people were being treated by the German people? Or by the Nazi party, really. What was going through your mind and the families and so on?

MR. LIEBSTER: Most of them tried to emigrate to other lands. And the Oppenheimers, where I worked, left Pforzheim near Mannheim and went to the United States. My sister also left. And I had no means to go, and so I was put into concentration, in the concentration camp, on January 4th in '39. I was put four months in prison.

INTERVIEWER: Can you recall the day you were picked up the first time? How did it happen? What was the circumstance?

MR. LIEBSTER: As I said, I came to my friends living up near the synagogue in Pforzheim. They took us along, put us in prison for four months. I was alone in prison. There I really had time to meditate, why the God almighty which always was backing up his people left the Jews being killed like that in the concentration camp. I couldn't understand it. Why? It was a big question, why the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could permit things like that, that his people would be destroyed like that by the Nazis.

INTERVIEWER: So you were picked up in 1939. So from 1933 to 1939, you were under a lot of pressure.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I was in Pforzheim, Mannheim. We had many times the crystal night, which destroyed all the synagogues. All our merchandise which was in the business was stolen and taken away. In September -- no, November -- 11th November '38 was the first hard persecution of the Jewish people in Germany.

INTERVIEWER: But up to that time though it was very hard for you to do your business, no doubt.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I was with my family, Oppenheimer, which belongs to business. No, we didn't get too much -- we didn't get greeted into town. Only minorities like the Nazis, which really created problems. A third or two-thirds didn't persecute us.

INTERVIEWER: So you were picked up. How did they treat you when you first went into prison? What was your treatment that you received?

MR. LIEBSTER: The first time, they didn't treat me bad. They treat me like a prisoner. The SS, they took me on January to get me up to Sachsenhausen, the first camp. He gave me a kick with his boots and he said, "You will never come back again alive, you dirty Jew."

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

MR. LIEBSTER: And he looked for -- this was especially a train for prisoners. There were only two people in each cell, in each compartment. And he looked for a place for three. And under 900 prisoners, was only one Jehovah's Witness. And I was put in the same compartment, in the same cell with a Jehovah's Witness on the train to Sachsenhausen, on January 1940.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And what did you discuss with him, since you were confined with him?

MR. LIEBSTER: As I came in this little compartment for two persons, I found a man which had peace in mind, had an expression of joy, deep inner contentment, that he could prove Satan definitely a liar. And I was all astonished that a man could have this expression on the way to death. He told me that he's one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had never heard about them. The first time I heard about them.

INTERVIEWER: What were they called back there? The Jehovah's Witnesses.

MR. LIEBSTER: (HEE BA FAU SHON). The people which is searching in the Bible, (FAU SHUS), searching in the Bible. (HEE BA FAU SHA) they call it.

INTERVIEWER: What were your discussions based on that?

MR. LIEBSTER: He told me that his wife was already in the concentration camp; she didn't say “Heil, Hitler.” And his children was taken away in the education house, like my wife was two years in the education place. And he now went with me to the concentration camp. He was the only Jehovah's Witness out of the 900 prisoners, and he explained me the Bible and answered me this question why the Jews are persecuted. They refused to accept the Messiah Christ, which is in the Hebrew scripture identified by 354 prophecies. The prophecies or the prophets is all realized. And he explained me that. And I was all astonished. And then I -- he gave me the answer why the Jewish people are persecuted and why God permits a thing like that. That opened my eyes for hope of a new world, a new heaven, and a new earth, which God will be realized for righteousness will be established. That gave me hope. A hope. I can't explain it. Later on, I found this picture for a calendar.

INTERVIEWER: Do you want to hold that up? Hold it up just a little higher.

MR. LIEBSTER: It is the hope the Bible gives, new heaven which Christ is king in the heaven with the true congregation, which will reign with him in the heavens. And this is his anointed congregation on earth, people of all nations. Jesus calls them the sheep. The sheep which come to the light by knowledge of the Bible. And the whole world is on the darkness. That's the system of things, which all with Hitler is in it. And all the dictators which works with the politics, they are all influenced under the system of things, which like the Bible calls them the ghosts which go

under destruction.

INTERVIEWER: Now, this was introduced by a Jehovah's Witness during the war?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes, during the war. I found it later on in the States, and it is my -- that's the vision which I had after the first contact with the Jehovah's Witness which explained it to me.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what was that year again that you came in contact?

MR. LIEBSTER: That I came in contact with the first Witness was in January '40.

INTERVIEWER: 1940. How long were you incarcerated with him?

MR. LIEBSTER: I was with him only 14 days, on the road. I was also in prison in a big building, prison building, in Frankfurt am Main. And there were all cages, like lion cages. I was a few days in lion cages with iron bars, and he was next to it. And like two elements. We were conversing together from one cage to the other cage, like lion cages. So we had one day in Frankfurt in the big prison. Hundreds of prisoners in each flight. Each flight was a prison arrangement, all filled with cages. And then after we went up to Sachsenhausen -- we arrived there, the SS asked each prisoner why do you come to the concentration camp. So he said he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and they were beating him up more than all other prisoners and gave him with the boots and with the feet and with the hands, like animals, like lions, and treating him very bad. All other prisoners were treated better than the Witnesses. They right away were isolated. We were 400 Witnesses in this camp, two barracks, and they were isolated. No one could get in contact with them. I didn't see him anymore. He died there, this person.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know what his name was?

MR. LIEBSTER: I don't remember his name. He was from Karlsruhe, near the Black Forest. And there were many were treated with -- The winter of '40 was -- '39/'40 was very cold; '41/'42 was also very cold. Put them on the roof in the courtyards all wet with water and let them freeze outside. And many Witnesses died there. And they made a line around an entrance, around 40,000 prisoners; 40,000 in Sachsenhausen. Everyone which would approach the Witnesses would get 25 strokes as punishment. They didn't want any prisoner to get in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses. They were afraid of the message that they carried to other people.

INTERVIEWER: Very interesting. So then you were still at this time identified as a Jewish person.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I got a David star in red and yellow. A David star. I was always in the camp as a Jew. I was not in the camp as a Jehovah's Witness. And I couldn't understand completely at this time. I had the privilege two years later, I was brought to -- from Sachsenhausen to Neuengamme, near Homburg. And there were a hundred Witnesses there in the prison. And the camp commander let me live with Jehovah's Witnesses, in the same barrack. And there I got more knowledge about Jehovah's Witnesses. I lived with them.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MR. LIEBSTER: In Neuengamme, at the second camp. I was six years in five different camps. The second camp was Neuengamme.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's go back to the first camp in Sachsenhausen. What type of assignments did you have there?

MR. LIEBSTER: There we went out working on different works outside and came in. But this time the Jewish people were isolated in one camp. And each one, they couldn't get out. It was more experimentation there. And treated very bad, the prisoners. Burning into ashes. The SS found something or when someone was missing three or four days, they were staying out day and night in the cold. My hands and feet are all frozen. All frozen. Here, the fingers. Some people, their ears were froze, falling down. The nose was falling down. I found in the other barrack my father that was there dying. The feet, the legs, all were swelling. They were swollen by the cold. And my father died there and I brought his body to the crematorium, like a piece of fruit on my shoulder, in Sachsenhausen.

INTERVIEWER: At this time what was going through your mind about the treatment again which you continued to see, which evidently got worse and

worse?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. We didn't have any hope to get out alive. There was no hope any more. And every day, there were every morning a heap of dead bodies. And the living ones, the ones that couldn't work, they were all exterminated.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Then you were transferred to Neuengamme.

MR. LIEBSTER: Neuengamme. That was a working camp. Thirty Jews were chosen from Sachsenhausen and transported to be with me in Neuengamme. There they were building a haven, a haven for boats to come in. And it is on the North Sea.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MR. LIEBSTER: And we did it all by hand, take all the sand out to build a haven.

INTERVIEWER: So now here is where you were put into the camp with Jehovah's Witnesses now.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. In the same barrack.

INTERVIEWER: In the same barrack. Did they have access to a Bible? Did you have access to a Bible there, or any type of literature?

MR. LIEBSTER: They had some pages sometimes, but I didn't have the whole Bible. I have -- I had a part of the Bible. We will show it later. And I have some pages which I had sometimes in the camp.

INTERVIEWER: How were they able to get that Bible into the camp and where did they hide it?

MR. LIEBSTER: They hide it in the clothes. In the clothes or in different places or in the straw, which they were sleeping on it. They put it in the straw.

INTERVIEWER: So you were sleeping on the ground then?

MR. LIEBSTER: No. We had three stories, like here. Only beds, three -- three stories. In Neuengamme, there were eight people living normally in one cage; and as I came, sixteen. One head -- like the sardines, one side on one side, one on the other side.

INTERVIEWER: So then when you went to work, did you work with Jehovah's Witnesses or did you just work with the Jewish people?

MR. LIEBSTER: I worked with the Jewish people there. The Jehovah's Witnesses had other jobs. They were sent many times for special work. I didn't work with them.

INTERVIEWER: What time of the day did your assignment begin and what time did it end?

MR. LIEBSTER: We had eight hours work; four hours in the morning, four hours in the afternoon. And then we had to come back and were counted at the entrance. The SS were controlling. Each one was written in, how many were prisoners with him. And I had to come in. Sometimes I wasn't in the cleaning. I have my number, 69733.

INTERVIEWER: Hold it up.

MR. LIEBSTER: That number was responsible for the nine others and were marking that they came back. When one was missing -- when one was missing, all had to stay outside in the big place until he was found, or all were punished.

INTERVIEWER: So then you were in the Neuengamme camp.

MR. LIEBSTER: Neuengamme, near Homburg. The second camp.

INTERVIEWER: Now, were you able to further your discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses there, as you were saying?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I was in the place and the other Witnesses was on the other side. And we were talking together every evening.

INTERVIEWER: We're in the Neuengamme camp. And you are -- your group of thirty Jewish people were put with --

MR. LIEBSTER: All in the same barracks, with about a hundred Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses. And I was astonished how the barrack was nice, clean, very good, kept in order. And another spirit was manifesting in this barrack with Jehovah's Witnesses. And they had really wonderful cooperation with each one to the other. And we had in this sleeping hall, three -- three flights; three beds, one above the other. I was on the third, and there was Mr. Anstrawa, which I had learned about him before. He was sleeping on the other side. And during this time I learned very much about the Bible. And every night he was interested to get to me information of the hope which God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God promised to Abraham all nations, all races would bless themselves in accepting the Messiah, which is proven in the Hebrew scriptures being the Christ. And 353 prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures. And many -- he knew all by heart. He explained it to me. That gave me conviction that this was true. He convinced me that is the only people which refused to kill one another. They love God more than themselves and their neighbor than themselves. And that convinced me that that is God's people. Then they bring the fruits of God's commandments.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you made mention what was going to happen on the planet earth in time then. What would happen on this planet earth?

MR. LIEBSTER: That this world will come -- God's kingdom will take all bad people off and only the good people will remain on earth. And that was my hope. Every time we were hours and hours staying on the place in the center of the camp, I was looking up through the clouds in the heavens, looking for help from God to get me over this difficult time in the camp. And I felt always peace in mind, in the heart when I searched the connection to get in contact with the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And that peace helped me along all the six years in five different camps.

INTERVIEWER: Now, at the Neuengamme camp you were working on the boat docks.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. To build boat docks, where the boats could come in. We had to descent all the transport with one wheel and carry all by -- on two boards. And you had to the whole day to walk. Prisoners have -- a hundred prisoners turned around hours and hours; one of us loading it, another one was taking it. Everything was done by prisoners like for some hundred thousands of years.

INTERVIEWER: What type of treatment did you receive in that barracks, since you were mixed Jehovah's Witnesses and thirty Jewish people? What

type of treatment?

MR. LIEBSTER: In Neuengamme, I wasn't treated bad. I didn't get any bad treatment physically. And I can say that we had to work, but the life was not too bad, like in Sachsenhausen and Oranienburg. It was really terrible there.

INTERVIEWER: And what type of food did you receive there? Do you recall?

MR. LIEBSTER: Well, most of the time I had soup. It was -- how you call it in English? What you give to the cows. How you call it? It was put in pieces and cooked in soup, and very few potatoes in it.

INTERVIEWER: How do you say it in German? Or French?

MR. LIEBSTER: Navet. Turnips, I think they are called. Like the big carrots which are round. They give them usually for the food for the animals. The animals' food.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. When you were in that camp in Neuengamme with

the Witnesses, did any of them die while you were there in that camp? Did any of those people die?

MR. LIEBSTER: The Witnesses? I don't remember the details of them.

INTERVIEWER: Then from that camp --

MR. LIEBSTER: At that camp -- I was only a few months in Neuengamme, then I was taken in -- It was '42/'43. All Jews were -- they took from other camps to the extermination camp at Auschwitz. They had gas chambers there. And there I got the number, 69733. 69733. And sometimes the number was so long, they put A, B, and C before their arms. A tattoo. And then so many people were killed. Twenty million were killed in the concentration camp; 5,700,000 Jews. And there they killed 4,000 an hour in Auschwitz. They were all burned in masses, masses.

INTERVIEWER: Did they gas them first and then --

MR. LIEBSTER: A big hall like douche -- to take a douche of water, a water shower. In place of the water came -- gas came out. And they were all naked. And only the number, they could identify. But they had no clothes, no papers, nothing. Only the number can identify which one was dead, which one was still alive. That was the only control, identification, was the number.

INTERVIEWER: Did the other prisoners actually realize what was happening to the people when they would go for this supposed shower?

MR. LIEBSTER: Most of them heard of them, yes. They knew. You are so tense, so excited, that you have no -- really, you can't realize. Really you can't realize what is going on. You are just a number. You are just in this situation, you can't really realize in defense.

INTERVIEWER: What type of work were you assigned in Auschwitz when you arrived?

MR. LIEBSTER: In Auschwitz, the younger -- the younger prisoners, the Jews, some of them were in working camps. There were thirty camps around Auschwitz. I was sent to Buchenwald. There I built a new factory for artificial rubber. Rubber factory. And there I was sent to Buchenwald to construct this new building. And there I was building the whole steel construction, and I was working there. And the steel construction, the SS were watching and everything was done by prisoners. No crew -- how you call it, pulling the tons of acid and the carrier and pinion and all in higher and steel, and all was done by prisoners. Like some other hundred tons of wood and it was pushing it. Some hundred prisoners were pushing the construction material.

INTERVIEWER: To regress for a moment, when you were in the Neuengamme camp, when you were transferred to Auschwitz, what type of transportation and how many were with you?

MR. LIEBSTER: All Jewish people which were at Neuengamme were in the train and transported to Auschwitz. I don't know how many, but some hundreds.

INTERVIEWER: Was it just open cars?

MR. LIEBSTER: No. There was like merchandise cars. Transportation for merchandise. There was no real human transportation.

INTERVIEWER: There weren't any chairs?

MR. LIEBSTER: No. No. I came back from Auschwitz to Buchenwald, also in open cars on January '45, in the cold winter. We was without roof, just cold. Cold transportation, in cases. And only straw was put in; sit down on the ground; no chairs, no beds.

INTERVIEWER: In Auschwitz what time did the day begin for you and what time did it end and what type of food?

MR. LIEBSTER: When the day came, we got a slice of bread, a slice of bread and a little bit margarine, artificial butter, and some cheese. And the coffee was all made artificially; artificial coffee. Something hot to drink in the morning. Then we had to stay out to get counted. And after -- every day, twice, all prisoners were counted; in the morning and in the evening, when they came back from the work. And if one prisoner was missing, the whole camp had to stay outside until he was found. Sometimes when they found him, they were hanging him before all prisoners; on the throat, tying it and pulling him up. All people could see him that he was killed when he was leaving. He was trying to escape.

INTERVIEWER: Did you come in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses there in Auschwitz again?

MR. LIEBSTER: In Auschwitz, no. We had only very few Witnesses in Neuengamme -- no, in Buchenwald, where I worked for the construction. Sometimes I was sick and I had the diarrhea and I couldn't walk anymore. Two other Jewish boys were carrying me. And I couldn't lift my legs anymore, I was like a sack. The boys pulled me into camp. And the SS with my group, he was near from my hometown. He recognized my accent, that I was the same country in Germany. So he called me and he got me out in the cafeteria for the SS, to distribute the food. And I was so weak I would have died in this moment. Then the next day, I couldn't work. And all prisoners which could not work were sent back to Auschwitz and the gas chambers. And I could not work anymore in this condition. So the SS saved me to get me out, better food, and get back to my strength. And this SS also gave me something for the transport to Buchenwald; otherwise, I wouldn't be alive.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the reason? Just because you were from his hometown?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. Well, he was raised in the same country near Mannheim, where I was ten years in the business. And this SS, one time he told me he's like the train which is going 180 kilometers, going down the mountain at fast speed. If he would stop killing the others, he would be killed by the other SS. If he stays in the system, he sees only death before his eyes. He was crying like a boy before me. In this situation, really he was obligated to continue in killing the others.

INTERVIEWER: Very interesting.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. He helped me to come over this situation in Buchenwald. And then there on this place where I work in the cafeteria, came prisoners repairing the electricity, the lamps and light. And they have been Jehovah's Witnesses. And I recognize them by their star. I start talking to them that I was in contact with the Bible and that I believe the teaching. So I gave -- every time the SS haven't been there, I filled -- put into working tools, a case, and I put some food for them in Buchenwald. So I could help them to get some more food. And I worked there, distributed the food for the SS.

INTERVIEWER: Very interesting.

MR. LIEBSTER: It is only the two Witnesses I met in Auschwitz or up in Buchenwald. And now I don't know their names. I don't remember if they survived.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to talk a little bit about the Bible with them?

MR. LIEBSTER: Not much, no. We worked there and I could just a moment to give some words, but not that much.

INTERVIEWER: All right. And then from Auschwitz, they asked you to go where then? Or they sent you where?

MR. LIEBSTER: As the Russians came close in January '45, it was near the end of the war. They wanted to get all prisoners more in the center of Germany. So we walked about 40 kilometers in January '45, in the snowstorm, from Buchenwald to (KLIVE VITS); the nearest train station. We had to walk and behind us were the SS with machine guns; and each prisoner which couldn't walk anymore, he was killed on the road. In two days, we walked. And then 20 degrees under -- below zero. Very cold. We were sleeping sometimes in the barns, on the straw, until we got to the train station. And there at the train station, were all around SS. And we were loaded on open cars, transported from (KLIVE VITS) to by Czechoslovakia to (BURN EN KOT). On this transport for one week in open car were more dead ones than were the living ones. And every morning the prisoners, all which died overnight, we put in one train transport car; one for the living, the other one were the dead. There were more dead ones than living ones. One car for living, the other one for the dead ones. And very few arrived in January '45.

INTERVIEWER: Did you receive any food at all on this trip?

MR. LIEBSTER: Every day a little warm water soup. We didn't get much to eat. The SS, he gave me a sausage, which I distributed each SS on a loaf of bread. He gave me a bread and a sausage, which I put under my clothes. And at night I could every night eat something off it. That helped me also to get over this time, this one trip to Buchenwald. We arrived in Buchenwald, it was -- they had the barracks, like I showed you which they had already. And the eight in one cage, they put sixteen or twenty. And there was typhus, a very sickness. And there I saw only the end of it for me. And I knew that -- I heard that some Witnesses were working with the little triangle in the kitchen, some Jehovah Witnesses worked in the kitchen. So I was very weak, but I said I would be willing to get the food over. And there I met Jehovah's Witnesses, and that helped me to get out of this dangerous place of typhus. Many every day there died like the flies, the prisoners. He got me over -- the baker, he got me out of the little camp to the big camp.

INTERVIEWER: How were they able to do that? How were they able to manage your being transferred?

MR. LIEBSTER: Transferred? He had connections, was responsible for his barracks. And he said as I went up to get food, I was staying in the big camp. I didn't get back in the other one.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when you were transferred to the big camp, then were you put into a barracks with Jehovah's Witnesses or was it with Jewish people?

MR. LIEBSTER: No. In Buchenwald, Jehovah's Witness were distributed like 400 barracks. And each barracks had only two Witnesses together; not all Witnesses. And I didn't -- and I was staying with him at the same barrack and responsible for the barracks was my home counsel. Ken Kindinger was his name. Mr. Kindinger gave me every day a little more food. And he helped me also get back to my feet and giving me some more food. And as I was working, there was one Jewish boy working with me, Fritz Hicorner, which you heard about him. And he was in contact with one Jehovah Witness in building barracks and houses. And he talked about the Bible. So we were liberated with him at the end of this time.

INTERVIEWER: So was he interested in Jehovah's Witnesses too?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. He recognized to see that it was the truth. And we both got baptized in bathtub of Lou Bloom, the president of France from Buchenwald. We both were baptized in the camp.

INTERVIEWER: Who was there? Mr. Bloom?

MR. LIEBSTER: Mr. Bloom was the head. His servant was one of the Jehovah's Witnesses. And with him as we were liberated in Buchenwald, we were too weak. We stayed some weeks in Buchenwald. And he used this villa where Lou Bloom was liberated, the first place to get all Witnesses together. And he also was with (high con). He wanted to destroy all Jewish people, Jewish prisoners, before the Americans came to liberate Buchenwald and were noted. And they had to dig their own graves and they were killed with the machine guns.

INTERVIEWER: And you were --

MR. LIEBSTER: I was up in the station and reading a part of Revelations as it is written in the Watch Tower. And there we are behind many pieces of foots. We were hiding behind to discuss the revelation of the Bible. And the train was left and then announced that all Jehovah's Witnesses can come together now in the Barrack No. 1. So I went with Jehovah's Witnesses together. 180 or near 180 Witnesses were in Buchenwald. And he gave a talk at the same time as the Americans came. And we heard the machine guns outside and the fights. And many SS were killed there liberating the camp at Buchenwald. So I was liberated with Fritz.

INTERVIEWER: So he became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

MR. LIEBSTER: We both got baptized. He's still preaching. He's still in the service. He was also in the missionary school, like I, the society.

INTERVIEWER: So then there was actually a Bible talk going on by Jehovah's Witnesses?

MR. LIEBSTER: For two hours, all by heart, all the Bible.

INTERVIEWER: So while the Americans were coming in, a Bible talk was going on?

MR. LIEBSTER: Was going on by Jehovah's Witnesses.

INTERVIEWER: So then what was your health like at that time when the Americans came in?

MR. LIEBSTER: I was quite sick. I had rheumatism and a fever, high fever. So I was treated by the American soldiers for one or two weeks. I was still in Buchenwald. I got some rice, rice soup with meat to get the digestion started -- get in action. The digestion system has to get back into action. I was there for two weeks and then went home. That helped me to get out of the little camp. I went home in '45, in April.

INTERVIEWER: And then after the war now, what did you begin to do when you got back? How long did it take you to get back to your home and what type of work did you begin doing after you got back home? How long did it take you to get back?

MR. LIEBSTER: I had no one there at the home. Our house was taken away. And I was living with an old lady in my hometown. I got preaching, started the preaching work with Jehovah's Witnesses. And in (RIS BAT TAN), the work got started with ten. We reorganized the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had a great part in reorganizing the work. And one mayor, which is responsible for the town where I was in business, he gave me a motorcycle. And with the motorcycle I showed American soldiers -- I showed my number, they gave me some gasoline. I was the first with a motorcycle to Switzerland and I got the first instructions of the reorganizing work in Germany for the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had a great part.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever gotten together with other people that you were in the concentration camps with?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I have many -- I have a whole group of Witnesses which have been in concentration camp, which I saw in Munich in '78. We had the big convention in Munich. This is responsible for the work in Germany. He was eight years in the concentration camp, and his wife in the other.

INTERVIEWER: The other young man with you who was Jewish, is he on there?

MR. LIEBSTER: He is another. Alex Epstein. He learned the truth in Auschwitz also. But I met him in the first convention in Nuremberg in '46. We had the first convention on the place where Hitler had his big demonstration, demonstrating his forces. And they had the first convention with Jehovah's Witnesses in '46.

INTERVIEWER: You were saying there are 144 pillars.

MR. LIEBSTER: 144 stone pillars, and the big memorial for a thousand year reign of Hitler.

INTERVIEWER: What was the purpose of the 144 pillars? Is that significant?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. In the Bible, it is 144,000 of the members of anointed ones which will reigh with Christ Jesus for a thousand years. So Hitler wanted to imitate the thousand year reign of Christ. He wanted it himself.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MR. LIEBSTER: And he had 144 pillars built in Nuremberg, the big demonstration place. Many of my friends also which helped me in Gusen, also there. He gave me the most information of the Bible in the

second camp.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Thank you. Now, you have a picture there of your wife and her parents. Maybe you could explain that for us.

MR. LIEBSTER: I can also tell you that I have the family here, the parents. They have been as Jehovah Witnesses in the camp four years. My father-in-law was four years in Dachau, and also in Auschwitz; a bad camp which killed many people.

INTERVIEWER: And which of those is your wife?

MR. LIEBSTER: Simone is right there. She was two years in reeducation home.

INTERVIEWER: She was taken away from her parents?

MR. LIEBSTER: She was taken away from her parents when she didn't salute Hitler.

INTERVIEWER: What was her religion before?

MR. LIEBSTER: She was raised as a good Catholic and became two years before the war, learned about Jehovah's Witnesses and became a Witness before the war.

INTERVIEWER: After that, after you helped to get the work reorganized in Germany, from (VEES BUT TON), what did you do after that for Jehovah's Witnesses?

MR. LIEBSTER: My sister was living in Charleston, West Virginia. And my sister sent the papers to come over to the States in January '47. I had free transport by the Jewish organization. Those that came out of the concentration camps had a free ride to the States. And I went to Charleston, West Virginia, in a little town, Donbar, and I started preaching full time. I worked there for nearly two years. And then I was coming to Bethel in Brooklyn. I worked on the --

INTERVIEWER: When you say to Bethel in Brooklyn, what do you mean? Bethel, Brooklyn?

MR. LIEBSTER: Bethel House of God, where the peoples work for God and his kingdom and producing the bibles and the publications and the Watch Tower. And it is distributed all over the States. And as I came there, there were 240. As I went to Kenya in '56, there was 480. Now, there are 4,000 or over 4,000 working there.

INTERVIEWER: You said you went to Gillian.

MR. LIEBSTER: The missionary school. Every five months training 110, 120 students, to all over the world distributed, 210 countries now to preach the good news of God's kingdom. Special training.

INTERVIEWER: And that training consists of what?

MR. LIEBSTER: They teach the whole Bible, from the first page to the last page. Training for public speaking, training Bible research, and trained to be missionaries. That means teaching the people from all nations the good news of God's kingdom.

INTERVIEWER: You have a picture there of your class?

MR. LIEBSTER: I don't know. Do I have it here? I don't have it here. You can stop it.

INTERVIEWER: A picture of the class that you graduated with at Gillian.

MR. LIEBSTER: The 27th class, 120 students. And sent all over the world to preach this good news of God's kingdom. Mathews 24:14, Jesus told this prophecy, that the good news of God's kingdom will be preached in the whole world, for witness to all nations, then the better world will come. There we can have special training. In every six months another class is going to school.

INTERVIEWER: Then what will happen to the earth after that, after the bad people are removed, according to your belief?

MR. LIEBSTER: The whole earth will be a paradise. And Jesus said in Luke 19:10 that Christ came in the world to find back what man has lost. Mankind has lost paradise on earth and mankind can find paradise through Christ, if he exercises faith in Christ.

INTERVIEWER: Now, after your class at Gillian, what did you do then after that? Where were you assigned?

MR. LIEBSTER: I was assigned back to France. And I got married with my wife. She was missionary in the 19th class. I met her in 1950. So I came back to Paris. I worked six years in Paris in the preaching work. On the work also in Paris, which I worked in Brooklyn. I worked there on the liner type part time and half a day at (BAL TA LA) in Paris. The other half day I was preaching. I had to learn the French language. I didn't know French. I am born in Germany, was ten years in the States. Now, I have to learn a new language in the missionary work. Then I worked seven years in sixteen different languages in Brooklyn, in the liner type.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Now, you also wanted to show the Bible that you had in one of the concentration camps.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I have --

INTERVIEWER: Would you like --

MR. LIEBSTER: -- a part of Psalms in German. It is very used, mainly in the concentration camp. When they got a Bible, they gave everyone some pages. And they got it and hiding in their clothes. In different places, they were hiding it. At night, I could read part of the Bible, meditated.

INTERVIEWER: So you had the whole Bible, except it was divided up among many prisoners?

MR. LIEBSTER: Many prisoners.

INTERVIEWER: You were able to hide that Bible where?

MR. LIEBSTER: Many had it under the -- you put it -- had a means to get it in places that the SS couldn't find it.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So you were able to have the Bible. How were you--

MR. LIEBSTER: A part of it.

INTERVIEWER: So how were you able to save that portion of the Bible for so long?

MR. LIEBSTER: Also put it someplace where it couldn't be seen. Even the SS were not there overnight. No SS. The prisoners were alone. So I could study it and read it.

INTERVIEWER: Were other prisoners allowed to have the Bible?

MR. LIEBSTER: I didn't see anyone. I don't see one, no. Only parts, I saw. I never saw a whole Bible in the camp.

INTERVIEWER: Did the other religious people in the camps, did they ever try to help you or Jehovah's Witnesses at all? The other religious people.

MR. LIEBSTER: Most of the other prisoners didn't talk about God. They didn't have any hope. They were talking about the things they ate before the camp. And the prisoners got all excited when they were talking about the goodliness and the good food they had before the camp. And this was tormenting us.

INTERVIEWER: Now, is there anything else you would like to show us in connection -- Would you show us the identification card that you had?

MR. LIEBSTER: This is in four languages. I was liberated in Buchenwald, and they gave us identification in four languages: English, French, Russian, and German.

INTERVIEWER: Very good. I have to change batteries. Would you like to show us the other pictures that you had before you went in the camp and then afterwards?

MR. LIEBSTER: That's a picture, I was 24 years old as I came to the camp. I was liberated, I was 30 years old. All down after six years concentration.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. LIEBSTER: And then I got married in '56. Simone. And I was sent to France. And as I came to (EX LA BA), there was no one here, Jehovah's Witnesses. And now we have two congregations and we build a nice kingdom hall in (EX LA BA). We have now since '62. 1962 we came over to (EX LA BA), and it is now 28 years.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you build that?

MR. LIEBSTER: All by volunteers. All the congregation was part of it. Forty or fifty volunteers have worked on it. They took their vacation to construct our kingdom hall. We had a newspaper article, I believe in God's Kingdom; for that reason, they built a kingdom hall. The newspaper was in (EX LA BA), an article.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you also said you had a picture of going to a convention.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. I was in a convention in Munich. 50,000 people there. And I was sitting there with two other Jewish boys which have been also in the concentration camps as Jews; and they came out as

Jehovah's Witnesses, like I am.

INTERVIEWER: And what are their names?

MR. LIEBSTER: Fritz Hicon. He was also in Gideon school, in the 10th class at Gideon. That's Alex Epstein. He's a city servant in Munich for 43 congregations. He's city servant in Munich.

INTERVIEWER: You mean he's the overseer?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes, of the whole town. Epstein. That's Epstein.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Very good. If I may call you Max.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you say or how do you feel when people say that the Holocaust didn't happen or it is sort of over-exaggerated? What answer would you give people like that?

MR. LIEBSTER: I was living in it and with it during six years in five different camps. And I know that 5,700,000 Jews were killed in the concentration camps. As I told you, 4,000 an hour in Auschwitz. And the camp was specially made for extermination. This was really an extermination camp and killed 4,000 an hour. It never happen in the whole history, the extermination of a race of people as in our generation.

INTERVIEWER: What goes through your mind about the capacity of humans to show love and kindness and empathy and then on the other hand, show some terrible violent expressions?

MR. LIEBSTER: I could only understand it knowing of the truth of the Bible. And the Bible tells you the whole world is the inspiration of the evil one. And I saw really the demon's world. You could see the demons out of their eyes and their actions, like the beasts. And the Bible called our system like the vile beast which is governing the world, which God's kingdom will take over. That's the hope of the true Christians, that God's kingdom will come and will govern the new earth; that God's will will be done on earth as it is already done in heaven. That's our hope, which we preach now over 45 years since my liberation.

INTERVIEWER: So since the concentration camp days, when you became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, you have been in full-time Bible educational work.

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. Since 45 years, I haven't stopped preaching the good news.

INTERVIEWER: Very good.

MR. LIEBSTER: I will keep going until I see God's promise realized.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else you would like to add before we conclude?

MR. LIEBSTER: I would like to encourage all people of good will to take time to search the knowledge of the Bible. Jesus is the greatest man which ever walked on earth. God's son. It tells us in John 17:3, it means everlasting life knowing only true God, Jehovah, and his beloved son, Christ Jesus. This knowledge we want to encourage all people of good will to find it in searching the Bible and studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. And I get this only hope which he's preached all over the world of a better world. And God's will will be done on earth as in heaven. And there is no other celebration. Peter the apostle said in Acts, Chapter 4, Verse 12, he said no other hope under the heavens, only God's kingdom. There is no other way of celebration.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that there will ever be peace on the planet earth?

MR. LIEBSTER: Yes. When like the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 24, in Micah, Chapter 4; two prophets was telling that a day will come when all people will live together in peace and they will learn war no more. They will learn to live together in peace and security and God's will will be realized. Two prophets, two witnesses in the Bible give the guarantee that God's will will be realized in our generation.

INTERVIEWER: Before we do conclude then, I would like to have you show us on the map the various camps that you were in. And we have that over here on the right, so we will just turn off the camera for a minute. Mr. Liebster, you said you wanted to show us a few maps before we conclude.

MR. LIEBSTER: For example, you can find in the Holocaust a special number. You will find on Page 10 all of the concentration camps, extermination concentration camps. You can find them. And for example, I was first in Sachsenhausen, near Berlin. Up here. I was brought up to Neuengamme. From Neuengamme, I was sent to the extermination camp, Auschwitz. At Auschwitz, I was at the working camps around Auschwitz. Then I was at Buchenwald. From Buchenwald, I was through Czechoslovakia, brought back to Buchenwald. At Buchenwald, I was liberated in April '45, in Buchenwald. It says here about 165 extermination camps have been shown on this page.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Thank you. And now here on the map --

MR. LIEBSTER: I can show you the first camp was near Berlin, Sachsenhausen. I was living before -- I was living near Mannheim. I'm born here and was working in Pforzheim, ten years, near Mannheim. And I was in the concentration prison. I was taken by the SS in Pforzheim. Here I was taken, was four months in prison. And in January 1940, in January '40, I was brought up from Pforzheim to Frankfurt. In Frankfurt, I was there in the cages, in the lion cages, in a prison in Frankfurt for one week, where I learned about the Bible. And there I was brought up to near Berlin, Sachsenhausen. Then I was in Neuengamme. There we were building the port for the boats. And from there, I was brought to Auschwitz. Auschwitz. Auschwitz is near Gryfice. And from there, I was on the train from Prague to Neuengamme to Buchenwald. (LYE MAR). Buchenwald. There, I was liberated in April '45.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. LIEBSTER: All traveling around, six years in five different camps.

INTERVIEWER: So at this time we would like to thank you very much for the time and your experience that you shared with us. So the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum would like to express that at this time.

MR. LIEBSTER: I am always happy to give witness for helping people to know about the truth. And only the truth will make them free from death and from all tribulation of this world.

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