



## **The Murder at Bullenhusser Dam**

April 24, 2013

1 hour, 10 minutes, 48 seconds

Speaker: Marek James

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Time	Transcription	Slide transcription
00:01	[The Library UC San Diego]	
00:05	[Marek James (1939-1945) A Family Gathering with Mark James]	
00:06	Susanne Hillman: So uh Mr. James, um, has expertise in computer engineering or processing. Um, he is, uh, has been the operations manager for the cyberinfrastructure team of the Ocean Observatory Initiative and the operations manager, research and biological assistance at UCSD [University of California, San Diego], and the manager of many other very complicated and important sounding programs. I am not a computer person, obviously. Mr. James has a bachelor of science in computer science and, from the Pennsylvania State University, and a master's in public administration from the University of Southern California. Please join me in welcoming our speaker, Mark James.	
00:58	Mark James: Thank you very much. First of all, I want to start with an apology, um, and that's for those people that are standing in the back or can't see. My wife invited three-quarters of the people here. Can you hear me in the back there? Good. Thank you, um, first of all, thank you for coming. Um, this, uh, presentation is really - there's two parts to the presentation. Um, the first part will be an overview of, uh, an experience that my wife and I had when we went back to Germany to celebrate a memorial, series of memorial services, about my brother who was murdered by the Nazis just before the war ended in Europe. And then the	Marek James (1939-1945): A Family Gathering  [image of family]  Mark James April 24, 2013

second part really deals with reacquainting or meeting family that I had never met before at these memorial services. So, that's how the presentation is broken up.

02:17 Mark James: Um, on April the 20th, 1945 the Nazis murdered 20 children that were being used for medical experiments. They also murdered four adult caretakers of these children. One of them was one of the doctors and the nurse and also approximately 24 Soviet prisoners, and every year in the city of Hamburg, um, this is where the murders actually took place, there is a memorial service that's provided and family members of the children often come back and attend these memorial services. And so I'm going to be describing, uh, our experience when we went back there and how much information I learned about my family as a result of that trip. By the way, um, I will accept questions as we go along. I'm not here to present 300 PowerPoint presentations to you and wait for questions at the end. So if you do have questions, feel free to ask them.

03:32 Mark James: This is a book that has information, detailed documented information about the murders that took place at the Bullenhuser Damm. Bullenhuser was the name of the school of where these, uh, murders took place. Uh, the gentleman you see there his name is Günther Schwarberg. He's the author of this book. He published a series of newspaper articles in a German publication called *Die Welt*, which is a national German publication, equivalent to like the *New York Times*, and he blasted the German government, the judicial system for not going after the Nazi criminals. They, of course, were very lenient after the war with many of the, uh, criminals. The, um, the information,

#### Yearly Memorial

- April 20, 1945 - The following murders occurred in the basement of Bullenhuser Damm, a local school in Hamburg, Germany.
  - 20 Jewish children
  - Four adult Jewish caregivers of the children
  - Approximately 24 Soviet POWs
- Each year memorial services are held in the city of Hamburg commemorating this event

Günther Schwarberg  
[book cover]  
[image of the author]

uh, about Schwarberg - it's hard to comprehend 6 million of anything - but to talk about 20 children that were used for medical experiments, that's, that's really what he was focusing on.

4:58 Mark James: This is a lady who met us at the airport when we arrived in, uh, Hamburg. This is Barbara Hüsing. This was Schwarberg's wife. She's actually an attorney. She helped him both with the articles and with the trials that were actually being held against the Nazi perpetrators.

Barbara Hüsing  
[image]

5:19 Mark James: Joseph Mengele, the angel of death. When you arrive at Auschwitz, if you were sick, if you were infirm, if you were a child, if you were old, uh, he would point one way to the gas chambers. And if you had the potential to be a worker, um, he would then point to another place, which were the barracks, and at least for a short period of time, you were saved. For whatever reason, my mother told me that when she arrived at Auschwitz the chambers were full or empty that day, or were, I mean, there was no more room in the chambers and therefore, uh, she was placed uh at a barracks, um at the far end of Auschwitz. He's the individual who actually selected uh the 20 Jewish children. Um, Mengele was known for lots of medical experiments, uh, both on twins and, uh, also on other prisoners. And some of them are quite horrific. Um, turned out though that Mengele was never captured after the war. He went to South America and he ended up, I think, it was 1994 when he died and it was in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Joseph Mengele  
[image]

- "Angel of Death"
- Garrison Physician of Auschwitz
- Oversaw who works or were gassed
- Conducted medical experiments on prisoners
- Selected the 20 Jewish children

06:47 Mark James: Kurt Heissmeyer. He was the doctor who actually conducted the experiments on these children.

Kurt Heissmeyer  
[image]

Because he wanted to become a professor, he needed to do quote, some original research, so he made up this particular experiment. In reality, the particular experiment was actually proven false about 15-20 years earlier when used on actual lab animals. His uncle was an SS [Schutzstaffel] general, general at Auschwitz, and also had contacts with Mengele. This is his assessment at the trial. The way he considered uh Jewish prisoners they were Untermenschen or sub-humans. He didn't have any, uh, he didn't think that inmates had value as human beings and he actually stated he saw no differences between guinea pigs and the Jewish children.

- Wanted a professorship
- Needed to do original research
- Uncle was an SS general at Auschwitz
- Considered Jews as “Untermenschen” (subhumans) and racially inferior to Germans
- “I did not think inmates had value as human beings”
- “Saw no difference between guinea pigs and Jewish children”

07:54 Mark James: So, what was the experiment? He inserted live tuberculosis bacilli directly into the children's lungs and then guess what, they got sick. The reason they're raising their arms is, after a month or two, he actually removed the lymph nodes and these are the pictures of the children with their arms raised. There were 10 boys and 10 girls, ages 5 to 12, and, um, you can see the countries, from Poland, Netherlands, France, Italy, and Yugoslavia. Is there a pointer? Um, this is actually my brother right here. He was six years old when that picture was taken.

Children  
[images]

- Inserted live tuberculosis bacilli into lungs
- Removed lymph nodes
- 10 boys and 10 girls
  - Ages 5 to 12
  - Poland, Netherlands, France, Italy, Yugoslavia

09:09 Mark James: Now most people, um, think of them, when they think of a concentration camp, they think of the main killing, uh, machines like in Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, etc. The ones that are written there in red. In reality, there were many, many more concentration camps. This year, on March the 3rd in the *New York Times*, um, somebody asked how many actual camps were there, and this is what was published: uh, in addition to the concentration camps there

Concentration Camps in Europe  
[map of Europe]

were 30,000 slave labor camps, 1,150 Jewish ghettos, 980 concentration camps, 1,000 prisoner of war camps, and 500 brothels filled with sex slaves. And then there were other camps used for euthanized, euthanizing the elderly, and the infirm, infirms, and performing forced abortions. In Berlin alone, researchers have documented some 3,000 camps and so-called Jewish houses. So a lot more, perhaps a lot more, people were actually murdered than what was being published. My, my brother was originally taken to Auschwitz, um, and then the medical experiments were actually conducted at the Neuengamme, which is just outside of Hamburg.

10:46 Mark James: Um, this is Arnold Strippel. He was the First Lieutenant at the Neuengamme concentration camp. He's the one who actually ordered the children murdered. In 1949 he was sentenced to 21 life terms. Now, one would think that was for the 20 children, as it turned out, there was an attempted, um, assassination on Hitler and he decided to take it out on 21 Jewish prisoners. And so, that's where he was given a life sentence. But, he had a good attorney, so in 1969 he was released and then retried for those 21 life terms. And then he was only given then six years for those 21 murders. And, uh, because he had already served 20 years, the German government compensated him and gave him money. So then in [19]79, they retried him for the children and he never went to actual prison as a result of that.

Arnold Strippel  
[image]

- SS Obersturmführer - First Lieutenant at Neuengamme Concentration Camp
- 1949 - Sentenced to 21 life terms
- 1969 - Released and retried
- 1979 - case against the children was re-opened
- 1994 - Died

12:20 Mark James: My wife and I, we actually went to the Neuengamme concentration camp. It's a very eerie feeling. How many people have been to other concentration

Neuengamme Concentration Camp  
[image]

camps? So I don't know how you felt, but this was not necessarily a, a killing facility. This was a, more like slave labor. They actually made bricks, uh, for the war effort at this particular camp. The building that you, or building, what was a building this was the, the bricks that was part of the infirmary where the actual experiments took place and the children were living. This was our guide, Marco, who was giving us a tour of the facility. The camp is roughly about a mile long and about a mile and a half wide. During, uh, the lifetime of this particular, this particular camp, um, during the war, there were roughly about a 1000,000 prisoners that were assigned, uh, to this particular camp throughout the war effort. Most of the people that were at this camp were not Jewish. They were dissidents, political prisoners, homosexuals, gypsies, people along those particular lines. There were about 40,000 prisoners who died at this camp. Um, most of them died of starvation, malnutrition, ill-treatment. After the war, the British used this camp as a prisoner-of-war facility and after the British left, it was used by Hamburg as a city jail. Today it's a museum. At the base of this building is, um, a memorial plaque that describes, um, the experiments that were actually being conducted in front of this particular building.

14:28 Mark James: And I don't expect you to read all this, but it just talks about the Kurt Heissmeyer and the experiments that were done. Um, originally he used adult prisoners, and then he used the 20 Jewish children from Auschwitz. And then, on April 20th, 1945, they wanted to obliterate all traces of this. On April the 20th the British were outside the city of Hamburg. So, they were about to enter, so it was decided

Neuengamme Concentration Camp  
[image]

that all traces of the children and the experiments would be removed and that's when they decided to kill the children.

- 15:14 Mark James: This is a picture of the Bullenhuser Damm. Bullenhuser Damm School  
This is actually the front of the facility. Today the facility is, [image]  
actually has, an elementary school in it, and some business offices. In the back, and in the basement is the actual museum for the children.
- 15:41 Mark James: Um, as you enter in, into the Memorial Museum, there's a, just a description there both in English and in German and it's dedicated to the children, the prisoners that were murdered at this particular satellite camp. Museum  
[image]  
Dedicated to children, adults, and prisoners murdered at the satellite camp
- 15:56 Mark James: When you first entered the museum, you enter in from the back, and on the wall of this particular museum there are posters that describe information about the the children, the commandant of the camp, the doctors that were involved in the experiments, and it provides a background information, uh, about that. So they have these large posters and pictures. And then, as you come, enter the museum and then come into, uh, this section of it - those are suitcases. And there's a single suitcase for each one of the children. And then within the suitcase, they have both audio, visual, pictures about each child. And it was a fascinating experience when we walked in there because I learned things about my family that I had no knowledge about before. Museum  
[image]
- 17:04 Mark James: When I was growing up my parents - I never discussed, um, the Holocaust with my parents. Both my,



both my parents were survivors. I didn't want to put them through that experience again. Um, now, now and then my father and my mother would relate some of their experiences though, as uh, as they got older.

17:33 Speaker 1: Were you born in America?

17:36 Mark James: Um, I was born in Germany after the war. The question was, was I born in America? No, I came here when I was two and a half. Um, this is a picture. Oh, it's me, um, and I'm talking to, um, Itzhak Reichenbaum, and, um, he was at Auschwitz with his brother, and what he's pointing to is a map of Auschwitz and he's showing where, um, the children were located and where he was located. When he arrived at Auschwitz, he was only 12 years old. He told the Nazis that he was actually 14 and therefore he was actually eligible to do slave labor work and he survived. His brother was one of the 20 children. Itzhak goes every year to the memorial service and this has been going on since the early 1980s. Um, the place that he's pointing to actually coincides very closely to what my mother had told me about where she was located in Auschwitz.

Museum  
[image]

18:56 Mark James: So this is, uh, the suitcase, uh, for my, for my brother. That's a picture of my father and my brother. And, uh, I don't expect you to be able to read that.

Museum  
[image]

19:13 Speaker 2: Mark, where did he get that picture? Where did that picture come from?

19:16 Mark James: Um, the picture probably came from my uncle. Um, he went to Canada in the mid-1930s. Um, he had left

Parents:  
[image]

- Adam and Zela James

uh, uh, Radom, Poland, where where my parents were born. So, I'm suspecting that's where it came.

- March 6, 1938

19:35 Speaker 2: The people who had to get it in touch, the people at this museum, got it from your uncle?

19:42 Mark James: Correct. I would assume that. Uh, it's very bizarre when I go out to the internet and I see pictures of, of, um, my father and my brother, uh, on the internet. Um, as a matter of fact, uh, what's also interesting is when you go out and do a, uh, a Google search on the Bullenhuser Damm there's something like 30,000 hits. And as you go through some of them, you'll see that they are in all different languages representing, you know, the children from, from where they came from. So other people are doing memorial services for these children. This is a picture of my parents on their wedding day, wedding day. My brother was born in, a year later.

20:41 Mark James: Um, this is a map of, a map of Poland. Here's Warsaw and here's Radom. Now, um, surprisingly Radom actually had two ghettos, two Jewish ghettos, and a number of slave labor camps. And surprisingly, a large number of the Jews from Radom survived the war. I asked my cousin, uh, why that was the case, and she said because the large leather boots that the Nazis wore and the heavy coats, they were manufactured in Radom.

Radom, Poland  
[image]

21:27 Mark James: So the first thing that, when I was reading about my brother, was that he was born on March 17, 1939 - approximately a year after my parents had gotten married. It turns out, coincidentally, that I have a grandson who was

Facts about my family  
[image]

- March 17, 1939
- 52 Traugutta St., Radom

born on March 17th. This was the name of the address and the street name of where my parents live. Again, this is all new information, you know, that came to me. Um, I knew that my mother had worked in a gunpowder factory. My mother was actually, um, when, when the Nazis came into Poland and they gathered up, uh, the Jews, they were first put into a ghetto, and then they were actually moved in - those that were able to - were actually moved into slave labor. My mother actually survived five different camps that she was sent to. My father was in the Polish Cavalry and so, you know, horses against tanks probably just wasn't going to cut it. That's why it only took six weeks to overrun uh Poland. Um, in 1944, the summer of 1944, my mother and my brother, and my father were transferred to Auschwitz. It wasn't until November when my brother was transferred to Neuengamme for the medical experiments. And this was something I, I had not seen before and that was this was the prisoner number that was assigned to my brother. Now Auschwitz was one of those camps where they were given the tattoos on their arms. Not all of the concentration camps did that, but Auschwitz was one of those.

23:34 Mark James: Um, they also found out that my father would have been taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Um, this was news to me. Uh, again, my, my father would describe his war experience - some of you are probably old enough to know about that, uh, have you seen the show Hogan's Heroes? My father said that he had a Sergeant like Schultz. My father was the, uh, would go out in the middle of winter and they would go out into the

- Mother worked in a gunpowder factory
- Transferred to Auschwitz - summer 1944
- Marek assigned prisoner number B1159

#### Facts about my family

- Father taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp.
- Mother taken to Gross-Rosen concentration camp.
- Marek taken to the Neuengamme concentration camp on 28 November 1944.
- Parents survived the camps.
- In 1949, the family emigrated to the United States.

gardens and they would steal potatoes so they could make vodka, uh, in his dorms. Uh, or he would uh take parts of his shirt and, uh, use that for paper to smoke cigarettes and tobacco. So those were the stories that he would relate to me. Then my mother was taken again to another concentration camp and here's the date of when, uh, my brother was taken to the Neuengamme concentration camp. Now both my parents survived the war. They were put into displaced camps, uh, in Germany and, um, uh, during that time period uh, uh, lists were published of other survivors and my father, uh, saw my mother's name and then went and retrieved her. And after the war both my parents settled in Germany and the doctors had recommended that my mother should have another son. In 1949 my parents immigrated to the United States. They arrived in New York City and then there were a number of Jewish organizations that helped locate jobs for people from from the survivors. And I grew up in a little town called York, Pennsylvania.

25:48 Mark James: Rose Grumelin-Witoński, she lost two of the children. Two of the 20 children were hers and Schwarberg showed pictures of the children to her and she recognized, not only you know my brother and her own children, but other children that were also from Radom. She ended up having another son also and he actually came to visit my wife and I and stayed with us when we lived in Los Angeles. That's where I got to learn more about the family and also about the memorial services that were being held. In 1993 Schwarberg tried to contact my mother. Now, my mother was still back in Pennsylvania. My wife and I moved out to California in 1969. If I had known about this I would have

Facts about my family [continued]

- Rose Grumelin-Witoński recognized Marek James as well as other children from Radom.
- 1993, Günther Schwarger tried to contact Zela James.
- A street in Hamburg is named after Marek James.

tried to intercede on behalf of my mother and talk to Schwarberg. There was no way my mother was going to talk to a German about her experiences in the war. So, that's my, to the best of my knowledge my parents really never knew what happened to my brother. My father died before all of these memorial services were being held. In 1982 is when I first learned about my brother and what had happened to him. And the city of Hamburg has made a decision. They built a new suburb and they named streets after each one of the children - either a street, either a school, or a plaza.

28:02 Mark James: The highest level officials in the city of Hamburg are actively involved in memorial services about these 20 children. This is the Vice Chancellor of the city of Hamburg. She actually gave a speech and a history as part of the dedication for the children. This is President of the Hamburg senate. When you walk into the next room, beyond that circle that you saw with all the suitcases, there are all of these cabinets and then within each, in the cabinet, is a detailed history - or as much as they found - about each of the 20 children. That's where some of the facts came from that I learned about my brother. I had mentioned the lady, Witoński. I don't know if you can see that in the back or not. But she had put in a request to get more information about my brother and again there's his, uh, the number that was assigned to him. Um, next to the room where the suitcases were is a memorial wall where it lists each of the 20 children, how old they were when they were murdered, and, um, also it references the doctors and the caregivers. And also it mentions about the Soviet

Museum  
[image]

[image]

[image]

prisoners that were murdered that, that day, on April the 20th. Here is Witoński. There's one, and the other one is over there. Those are her two children. I had mentioned, uh, there's my brother's name. Um, this R. Zeller, Roman Zeller. You'll see that name in a few minutes. Um, and then there's Eduard Reichenbaum, that was the gentleman that I was talking to about Auschwitz, that was his brother.

30:12 Speaker 3: I have a question. What methods did you use for tracking down your brother's information? How were you able to track down his information?

30:23 Mark James: I learned most of these things when I went to Hamburg. So I'm relying on, on the - this information I'm giving you, it was based on the curators of the museum and the information that they were able to track down. I contributed very little to this, other than what I could tell them about my parents, uh, growing up. Um, this is the room where the, uh, the actual murders took place. Um, these gold bricks that you see there, uh, this was actually an art project. It was done by a student and people come in and they might want to move those bricks around. Across the top of this, which you can't see, was a long-running pipe and what they did is they hung the ropes from that pipe. The children because they were so young, weak, and emaciated what they had to do was they lifted a 12-year-old boy and then he put the noose around them, and then he clung to the boy's body - bringing his full weight to bear on the noose. In other words, just hanging them was not enough, because how young they were. Um, this particular, uh, the doctor, who was a physician at Neuengamme, they said, well we were very cognizant of the children, and we didn't

Museum

[image]

This is a description of how the Nazis murdered the children:

*"Frahm lifted the twelve-year-old boy up in his arms and said to the others, 'I'll take him to bed now.' He went with him to a room, which was maybe six to eight metres from the common room, and there I could already see a noose on a hook. Frahm put the sleeping boy's neck into the noose and then clung to the boy's body, bringing his full weight to bear on the noose."*

Alfred Trzebinski in April 1946, SS Standortarzt (garrison physician) at the Neuengamme concentration camp; sentenced to death for murder and executed in October 1946.

want to put them in any pain. So, they gave them morphine so they would rest easier.

- 32:09 Mark James: Behind the museum is a rose garden and this is maintained by the city of Ham- by the citizens of Hamburg. It's not maintained even by the museum staff and in there, there are dedicated plaques for each of the children. Um, uh, the German is translated up there for you. Uh, Marek James from Radom, who was only six years old. We will not forget him. His friends. Um, this is a gazebo that's part of the, uh, part of the rose garden that's there. These are white roses and notice the stones that are up there. Typically, when you go to a cemetery you place a stone there. Those stones were there before we got there.
- Rose Garden  
[image]  
Marek James from Radom. He was only 6 years old. We will not forget him. His friends.
- 33:00 Mark James: Um, this was a statue that's part of the rose garden and this is dedicated to the, the Soviet prisoners. Now it's very interesting, as much as they know about each of the children, they know next to nothing about each of the Soviet prisoners. So there's just a memorial that was there.
- Rose Garden  
[image]
- 33:24 Mark James: And this is the, uh, street that was named after my, uh, brother. Uh, I only took 400 pictures of this. There were, the street runs for about two blocks, um, and then it runs into another street named after another one of the children. It's a very nice suburb. It was springtime in, in Hamburg when we were there. We had very nice weather. We were very fortunate.
- Marek James Street  
[image]
- 33:56 Mark James: So, I had mentioned Roman Zeller. This is a actual little, little plaza with strip malls, shops, and every year at this particular plaza they hold a memorial service for
- Ceremonies - April 20, 2011  
[image]

the children. Uh, while we were there in Germany we actually attended three separate memorial services on April the 20th. And so, this is the location of the first one. Um, this is the date April 20th, 1945 and it says underneath that Kinder from Bullenhuser Damm. And so, on all of the street signs around there, you'll see that date and that, that message under each of the street signs. In this plaza, there's a permanent memorial plaque or statue for the 20 children. This was done by a Russian artist and while we were there we actually met with the, the wife who did this rendition that you see there. In addition to this permanent monument that's there every year, they put up a temporary wall made out of cinder blocks and they put the children's pictures, uh, on that particular, uh, cinder block.

- 35:24 Mark James: So this ceremony started off around noon time and, um, you see the children there. They're carrying flowers. Ceremonies  
[image]
- 35:35 Mark James: So, there were two schools, roughly 200 children, and they were fourth graders ages 9 and 10. And as part of the ceremony, the children laid the flowers at the base of that cinder block. A child was assigned, uh, representing each one of the children, and they would read poems, uh, or tell a story about each of the children. Ceremonies  
[image]  
2 schools, 200 children, 4th graders, ages 9-10  
Read poems and letters to the children, laid flowers
- 36:09 Mark James: So, um, this is a close-up of the picture of my brother. They also lit memorial candles, and then also they had stones there with the children's names put on it. This is a very emotional ceremony, while we were there. So, after they had read their stories, they were then tacked up on the wall. They have ten of the pictures on this side and then Ceremonies  
[images]



they have the other 10 pictures on the other side. This temporary wall stays up for a period of about two weeks. Afterwards, we actually went to an elementary school and it was named after another one of the children and we had lunch with some of the teachers, afterwards. My wife and I were introduced as guests and after the ceremony, I had an opportunity to interact with the children. I find it interesting, Hitler would have been - turned over in his grave - seeing me talking to a black person there. They would ask me questions, and, uh, between my, my - what German I remember when I was two and a half years old - um, and between an English translator, we were able to uh answer the questions. So, now we're back at the school. This is now going in for the second ceremony. Um, this was for the afternoon and the first of these, of the second ceremony, the first one that we had there was for the citizens of Hamburg and the dignitaries from Hamburg. And you can see them milling around and then starting to go into the school. This is the, uh, gymnasium that they had. Uh, there are roughly about 200 people, uh, that were there for this particular, uh, ceremony. Um, here's that, uh, Itzhak Reichenbaum. He said kaddish, which is the Jewish prayer for the dead, as part of the ceremony. As I said, he goes there every year. Then a third ceremony was held and this is really for, like, high school students. They sang songs, they told poems and there were another 200 people there in attendance.

38:52 Mark James: A child was selected for each one of the students or each one of the children, and they gave a short speech in their native language. Because my wife and I

Ceremonies  
[image]

were there, this young man actually spoke to us in English. What's also interesting is his shirt says San Diego West Coast. I don't know. That was a nice touch. Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to talk to him after the ceremony and I tried getting his email to try and communicate with him but never actually received it. Um, after the, after this ceremony one of the parents came up to my wife and I and he said he normally doesn't attend these kinds of functions but his son happened to be in the choir, so he decided to come. He's, he ran a restaurant, and then he said if my wife and I were in his area, you know, we were his guests. It was nice being a minor celebrity there. So that concludes like the first half um before I go on and talk about the rest of my family. Are there any questions I can answer? Yes.

- Several children gave a short introductory speech in remembrance of each child in the child's native language
- Russian was spoken for the POWs murdered

40:10 Speaker 4: Is there any evidence that this was in the curriculum at any of the schools, and the teachings that these kids got?

40:20 Mark James: Yes, at least at the the schools that were represented by those children, uh, that is part of their curriculum. Also, um, every day there are 20 to 30 children that visit the museum from the different schools in Hamburg, and all age groups, high school, middle school, actually attend that. The question was, uh, is there any evidence that there's a part of the curriculum? Other questions? I saw a couple more hands. Yes?

40:55 Speaker 5: Do you have any reason why your brother and those particular children were chosen? Did anybody explain that?

41:03 Mark James: I believe the question was, why was my brother chosen and the other children were chosen? I have no, no knowledge of that. All I know is it happened to be one of those, luck of the draw. Yes?

41:16 Speaker 6: Are there other cases like this in other places in Germany or in Poland, where they took children, and did these kinds of experiments, and then killed them?

41:26 Mark James: The question was, are there other examples of this where they used children for experiments? I had no personal knowledge of that. Okay, um, I'll go on into the, the second half. Um but also, as horrible as this was, it was also very uplifting, and it has to do with this portion of it. In 1984 my oldest son Adam was asked to develop a family tree. Now as far as I was concerned, I knew I had family in Canada, Australia, but I did not know what - other than my uncle and my first cousins - I did not know what the relationships were between all of the family members. So, um, I sat down with my mother and - let's see [19]84 she would have been, yeah, 72 years old, thank you, um - so I asked my mother to describe her family and my family and I began then the development of the family tree. I grew up thinking I had almost no family and my, the initial family tree on my father's side was only two pages long. But that started out as a basis, and then I sent copies of that to other members of the, of the family, and then they began to fill in more of the family tree. On my mother's side, it's now up to 36 pages. So, it was interesting going, going through that particular process. So, I assisted my son with the family tree and I also did the same thing for my wife's family. So, I still maintain these by the way.

#### Family Background

- 1984 - My oldest son Adam starts Sunday school
  - Adam is asked to develop a family tree
  - I grew up thinking that I had almost no family as most were destroyed during the Holocaust
  - I asked my mother what she remembered about the family
  - I assisted my son with the family tree which I still maintain today for both of my parents and my wife's parents

43:33 Mark James: Um, here's a picture of my maternal grandparents. So, that's my mother and her parents. My mother told me that when the Germans marched into Radom the Nazis yelled *Juden raus*, which is you know Jews out. According to my mother, my grandfather refused and they shot him right then and there. So she had to live with that.

Maternal Grandparents  
[image]

44:05 Mark James: Um, at a family function in Toronto, I gave a copy of the family tree to a cousin, and then his daughter Gail found the tree 20 years later. And then she gave it to a cousin of hers by the name of Helena. Now Helena wanted to learn more about the James family tree, so she took that as a basis and she was relentless in trying to learn more about the family. She wrote to the Polish government and she was able to get records and facts about my family that I had absolutely no, no information about. Um, she's also the one who put the people, uh, put the people that were in charge of the museum directly in touch with me. Uh, Helena found me via the internet. Um, so that's a great vehicle for communicating with folks, and then that's when we decided to go over and go to the memorial service. We were supposed to go in 2010, um, but if you - I don't know if you remember - but Iceland had a big volcano that went off and her flight got canceled. So, we didn't have an opportunity to see them. So, we went in 2011.

Family Background

- At a family function in Toronto I gave a copy of the family tree to a cousin
  - His daughter Gail found the tree 20 years later and gave it to her cousin Helena
  - Helena contacted the Polish government and got pictures of my fraternal grandparents
  - Helena contacted the organization that supports the Museum and put them in touch with me

45:32 Mark James: This is a picture of Helena, with her daughter Shelly. First time I met her was in Hamburg. They're from Toronto and Shelly actually spoke at the memorial service. Now unlike my parents - we never discussed the Holocaust, or their experiences in the war - um, Shelly's grandparents,

Family  
[image]

who were both, both survivors, every day they talked about what happened to them during the war. So, she described her experiences to the people from Hamburg.

- 46:15 Mark James: This, this is one of the records that my cousin Helena was able to locate from the, uh, Polish government, from Radom. That's a picture of my, my grandfather and I had never seen that picture before. Paternal Grandfather  
[image]
- 46:35 Mark James: And then this was a picture of my paternal grandmother. So, a little bit more about my background. Paternal Grandmother  
[image]
- 46:48 Mark James: Um, I was born in Regensburg, Germany 1947. I'm the leader of the pack here. Next to me is my, uh, cousin Sylvia who ended up in Australia. And then I was named Marek, after my brother and my uncle named his son Marek also. Okay, now why am I giving you all this? You'll see. So, cousin Marek, um, went to Israel. We were pen pals. It turns out his mother divorced my uncle. I think it's when my uncle tried to shoot her. He's a bit of a lady's man, the way it was described. Um, so we communicated; we were pen pals growing up. Um, cousin Marek married and had a son called Guy in 1972. Marek was killed in the 1973 Yom Kippur war. So, I could never locate Guy James. Um, first of all, there is no J in the Hebrew alphabet. It's a, it's a Y. So, it was Guy Yamas. Not only that, Guy's mother remarried and he took on the name of, the married name, so it was Shaha-Yamas. My cousin Helena tracked him down. So, these cousins - who I had never, you know, met before - we all agreed we would meet at the memorial services, um, in Israel. I mean in Hamburg Family Background  
[image]
- Regensburg, German - 1947
  - Cousin Marek went to Israel - pen pals
  - Cousin Marek married and had a son called Guy in 1972
  - Cousin Marek was killed in the 1973 Yom Kippur war
  - Cousins from Canada and Israel agreed to meet in Germany for 2011 memorial services

48:41 Mark James: So, this is a picture of Guy, his wife Dafna, and their youngest son Uri and this again is a picture of Shelly, Helena, and my wife and I. And this is taken again, in the rose garden. So, we bought some flowers or bought some rose bushes, and we planted them. While it looks like I'm working, cousin Guy is doing all the work. Cousin Guy is a fascinating individual. He's the equivalent of Israeli Special Forces when he was in the Army. He has some interesting stories, you know, to tell us. And here he is helping my cousin Shelly and again after we leave, this garden is maintained by the people of Hamburg. Um, this is a picture of Uri, uh, their youngest son. This is taken at the Neuengamme concentration camp. Here it is, a fourth-generation Jewish boy, you know, walking around the camp.

Cousins  
[image]

49:53 Mark James: This is the Appellplatz, um, that's where, you know, the Germans would call you out at 4 am and say give me your name and your number. And this is what the buildings look like, like the infirmary that you had seen. This is down, but as I said, this, this camp is now a museum. This is me holding, uh, my new cousin. Um, we walked around the camp for about an hour and a half, and then, you know, we decided to go in and take a break. And we went inside the Museum, and, uh, went up to a lady who was just serving drinks and this is when I lost it - it became very emotional - uh, for me. The, the lady behind the camp only spoke Spanish. Fortunately, my wife does too, so she was able to communicate with her. But when I, when she was told that I was one of, the brother of one of the children she knew the entire story, and most of the people there, at

Cousins  
[image]

this, at the, at the museum were well aware about what happened to all the children.

51:13 Mark James: So, I think, just as a conclusion, growing up, um, my parents avoided all things that were German. You know, they would be disdained about, you know, Volkswagen or other German products. Um, occasionally I would have to have a business trip to go back to Germany and it just felt weird. I was treated well. I never had a problem, but I always had this nagging feeling about that whenever I was in Germany. And I had several trips back there. This surprised me, that the all the organizers here, none of them were Jewish. Again, all being handled by, uh, by a private foundation now, originally it was by the city of Hamburg. Um, another thing regarding, uh, memorial about the, in the city of Hamburg, as we walked around the streets we'd see these gold plaques in front of houses and what they were were the names of Jewish people that had been evicted from their homes. And it's my understanding, that once a year, uh, people have to go out and clean those, those plaques, those bricks in front of those houses. Uh, we found out the same thing was true in the city of Cologne. Younger generations are being made aware of what happened.

52:53 Mark James: I mentioned this earlier, each day 20 to 30 children visit the museum. Highest level of local governments are participating in the remembrance ceremonies. It certainly changed my attitude, at least as far as the city of Hamburg was concerned. Now I can't say the same thing about the rest, rest of, um, Germany but it, uh, it gave me a different perspective on that. Don't

#### Impressions

- Avoided all things German
- Business trips - couldn't wait to leave the country
- The organizers of the museum dedicated themselves to make the citizens remember these children - none Jewish
- Younger generations of Hamburg are made aware of the atrocities of the Nazis

#### [continued]

- Each day 20-30 children visit the museum
- The highest levels of local government are participating in the remembrance ceremonies
- Internet - connecting people
  - Teresa Lazzaro - Sicily

underestimate the power of the internet. What is it? Is it, there's over a billion Facebook accounts. Um, out of the blue, I get an email from a lady called Theresa Lazzaro out of Sicily. She had read an article about me making a presentation about, uh, about my brother. She got a hold of me and I actually ended up giving a mini-presentation to her students in Sicily. We did it using Skype via the internet. Um, so it was, it was an interesting experience. And I do appreciate all the efforts extended on behalf of my brother, and my family. Um, after meeting these cousins we said let's get together again, and just at the end of March, this past March, we had family fly in from Israel. My, my cousin Guy with the two older boys and his wife and, uh, Uri came. Uh, we had cousins from Vancouver, uh, and Toronto, and then also family from LA [Los Angeles] who came down. So it's a nice little get-together.

55:07 Mark James: And then this was just a series of references, uh, about this. Um, you had mentioned about the Shoah Foundation. Um, I had asked my mother if she wanted to participate in the Shoah, as being interviewed. Surprisingly, we actually knew one of the people who conducted the interviews. And originally my mother had said no, and then at some point, they ended up closing it off, you know, the number of people there were. And then after that, my mother said, yeah I'll go ahead and be happy to do a presentation, you know, about it. So that concludes, uh, what I have. Um, questions? Yes?

- Appreciate efforts being extended on behalf of my brother and family
- My wife and I are thrilled at meeting new family

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- 55:54 Susanne Hillman: You said your parents didn't talk much about or not at all about what happened during the war um I still want to ask did your mother ever say anything about your brother to you?
- 56:06 Mark James: Uh, the question was, did my mother ever say anything about my brother to me? Other than the fact that they said that I had a brother and that he died in the war, that was the extent of the information that was given to me. As I said, many of the facts that I presented here, I did not know about a lot of these things until I went there, to Hamburg, and saw, saw what was being done. In 1982, another cousin, on my mother's side, they published a monthly newsletter for the survivors of Radom and he sent me an article that was written about my brother. Um, and so that's when I really first learned about some of the details, and then when, uh, Witoński's son came to the United States, he visited with us and he also related some of the information about my brothers. Yes?
- 57:05 Speaker 7: Do you have any plans to go back with your children, grandchildren to this memorial?
- 57:10 Mark James: The question is, do I have any plans, uh to go back, uh, to take my sons and my grandsons? And according to my wife, the answer is yes. Yes?
- 57:24 Speaker 8: Mark, were there any Jewish organizations or synagogues in Hamburg that are involved in this remembrance?

- 57:31 Mark James: The question was, are there any Jewish synagogues that are involved in the remembrance? I don't have any personal knowledge of that. It just so happens, that when, when we went back um to, for the memorial service it was the first night of, uh, Passover. And, uh, my wife and I, and my cousin Shelly and my cousin Helena, we went to a Seder and we were with our closest 300 friends from the local Chabad in Hamburg. And we attended Passover services there. Um, but are they actively involved in this? Again, to the best of my knowledge, I don't know. Um, I personally believe that because of the amount of publicity that this thing receives, um, I was interviewed by at least seven or eight different newspapers in Germany. So, there's a, the story is getting around uh you know about that.
- 58:38 Speaker 9: I was curious, your parents stayed in Germany for a little while after the war. Was that difficult? What was that transition from the concentration camp to life in Germany?
- 58:51 Mark James: The question was, my parents stayed in Germany after the war. How was that transition for them? I, I don't know. Remember, I was born two years afterwards and I was only two and a half when we came, came to the United States, so I don't know how that transition was. My mother was pretty ill as a result of her experiences in the war. Um, uh, my uncle, uh, had a business established there so I'm sure my father and my uncle were somehow involved in, in that process. So, I don't have an answer for you and I apologize.

- 59:36 Speaker 9: On top of that, how many people stayed in Germany, or did most people leave?
- 59:44 Mark James: Well, when the war ended and quote - they were freed from the concentration camps - they were really put in displaced camps until uh they could you know find some other method of leaving. Uh, I know some people went back to, um, their, their different countries that they came from only to find that most the people were obliterated from, from the, most of the Jewish people were obliterated. Um, and then travel to other, you know, other locations. Um, questions? Yes?
- 1:00:21 Speaker 10: Excuse me, how much do you think your mother and father really knew about what happened to their son?
- 1:00:26 Mark James: Um the question was, how much did I think my parents really knew about what happened to my brother? My father died before a lot of this information came out. Um, so to best my knowledge, my father never knew what had transpired. My father was a hard-drinking, hard-smoking, you know, Polish Jew. He would come home every day for lunch and pour a double shot of vodka and then have a Polish kielbasa. So, he died fairly young. My mother, English was not her native tongue. Even after 40 or 50 years here in the United States, she spoke with a very, very thick accent and I don't believe she was aware of the written publications that came out. Also, my mother had dementia as she got older. So I know I - from the time I learned about my brother - again I would never bring that up and discuss it with her. Yes?

- 1:01:31 Speaker 11: But because he wasn't on any survivor's list, they assumed that he'd perished, just not knowing the manner.
- 1:01:38 Mark James: That would be my assumption also. The question was because he was not on a survivor's list they assumed he had died. I believe that would be the case. Um, my father and my uncle were both in the German - German - in the Polish army. Um, so they they served, as I've been told this, as like kapos in the various camps. I believe that may have helped them to survive. My mother spoke multiple languages, so she was able to relate German instructions to other workers and I believe that was one of the things that also helped her survive. Question?
- 1:02:28 Speaker 12: Didn't the Germans do have extensive reports on what they did in the camps?
- 1:02:38 Mark James: Um, the question was did the Germans have extensive reports about everything that was being conducted to, to the prisoners?
- 1:02:45 Speaker 12: Yeah didn't they have lists of different things that happened, and I thought they had extensive -
- 1:02:51 Mark James: The Germans were notorious for keeping track of everything that went on with, with those prisoners. Not all of the records are still, have been made available yet. I mean there are millions of records that are still being slowly being, uh, released, uh, by, by the Germans. Um, there was a book that was published about seven, eight years ago - maybe ten years ago - about IBM's involvement. They had punch cards about each of the citizens. When, when the

Germans marched into either a city in a particular country they actually had complete names of all of all the Jews. They were entered; they were all put on punch cards.

- 1:03:36 Speaker 13: The books called *IBM and the Holocaust* and the IBM number is the same number that is tattooed on a person's arm.
- 1:03:43 Mark James: Would you repeat that?
- 1:03:47 Speaker 13: Sure, the books called *IBM and the Holocaust...*
- 1:03:50 Mark James: Oh, yes, yes. I did -
- 1:03:51 Speaker 13: It was reviewed by the head of the, uh, archives, uh, for World War II of the United States. And secondly, the number itself was a census number, and it's the tattoo number. It's also the number on the concentration camp [unclear].
- 1:04:06 Mark James: Uh, the comment was made the title of the book was *IBM and the Holocaust* and that the identification number was the same as, uh, the tattoo. Um, not all of the camps, uh, actually did tattoos. Um, but the ones that did, I'm sure that was the case in terms of the records that were being assigned. Yes?
- 1:04:28 Susanne Hillman: I have another question. Uh, growing up in this, it sounds like silent home, um, at least in regards to the past, did you get a sense that your - I mean did you experience some sense of your parents having been traumatized? I mean, they were Holocaust survivors, and

they probably went through horrible things. Did it, was there a sense of that in your home or did you not notice anything?

1:04:53 Mark James: Um the question was, uh, did my parents, uh, were they traumatized by their experience when they were, when they came to the United States? My father committed himself to become American as soon as possible. Um, and by, by 1951-52 he was the first, uh, on our entire block to get a tv [television] so he could learn English. He went to night school to learn English. Since it was never discussed, did I get any feelings about that? I was two and a half years old and I had almost, you know, no memory about about the Holocaust. Yiddish was the primary language and English were spoken in the house. I knew that when it, uh, when it got to be in Polish I was in deep trouble because I knew it was directed at me. I do know, I did remember most of the Polish swear words. I grew up as a normal American child. My parents would speak to me in various languages and I would answer them in English. But, as far as their experiences - occasionally it might come out. You know, I think my mother said, God bless America. So she was very happy to be away from Europe. Um, my parents had no desire to really go back, uh, to Europe. My father went to help my uncle out after he shot his what, uh, his ex-wife - or his wife - um, helped get him out of jail, I think, towards that experience

1:06:42 Speaker 14: Did you mom [unclear]

1:06:46 Mark James: Yes. Um, my wife reminded me that, uh, first of all, my mother was fearful of dogs, particularly German shepherds. Um, in our, uh, house growing up, or sorry in

our house in York, Pennsylvania my mother had six or seven different locks on the door. She would lock herself out occasionally, too, but she did that. So she was very distrustful of people. Occasionally I'd get a call in the middle of the night, you know, they're coming to get me. So yeah, as she got older that information or those experiences would come out. Yes?

- 1:07:40 Speaker 15: Somehow, you knew from a very early age, don't talk about this. Don't ask questions, right?
- 1:07:52 Mark James: I believe the question is, somehow from an early age I knew not to discuss that with my parents. And the answer is yes. Because I would read books or see movies about the Holocaust. I would go to Sunday school and learn about it. Um, so I made a very conscious effort not to have long discussions with my parents about that. But facts would come out periodically. But it would be not open - we would not have open discussions about that.
- 1:08:30 Speaker 15: Did you just sort of guess that, given that they weren't the ones educating you about the situation? That you were learning about it in the school and other places...
- 1:08:40 Mark James: Most of the information I gathered were all third-party.
- 1:08:44 Speaker 15: And so you were putting two and two together. I know they went through this. They don't talk about it. We don't want to talk about it.

- 1:08:53 Mark James: Um, I made that decision consciously or unconsciously, that I did not want to put them through those experiences again. Other questions? Yes?
- 1:09:05 Speaker 16: [unclear]
- 1:09:10 Mark James: I'd like to introduce my wife and booking agent. My older son graduated from UCSD [University of California, San Diego] and while he was here he was actually taking a book or taking a class about the Holocaust. One of the books he had to read was from the Commandant of Auschwitz. And for a project for that class, he interviewed my mother asking her details about her experiences in Auschwitz, and then he was going to do a compare and contrast with, with what was in the book. And the basic conclusion was, the book was pretty accurate. Um, you know like, did my mother experience any bad experiences with the guards? No, she was relatively left alone while she was in Auschwitz. And that's, things like that were in the book. And he was able you know compare and contrast. Uh, what were the meals like? You know, my mother said, I would get a loaf of bread about this thick and then some weak potato soup. Um, and that's what she had to subsist on and that again corresponded very closely to what, what had been written by the Commandant. Any other questions? I thank you for your patience.