

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:23,610

2

00:00:23,610 --> 00:00:24,948

Good morning.

3

00:00:24,948 --> 00:00:26,490

My name is Bernard
Weinstein, and I'm

4

00:00:26,490 --> 00:00:29,070

the director of the Kean
college Oral Testimonies

5

00:00:29,070 --> 00:00:31,710

Project of the Holocaust
Research Center.

6

00:00:31,710 --> 00:00:33,930

We are affiliated with
the Video Archives

7

00:00:33,930 --> 00:00:36,570

for Holocaust Testimonies
at the Sterling

8

00:00:36,570 --> 00:00:38,580

Library of Yale University.

9

00:00:38,580 --> 00:00:41,850

Sharing the interview
with me is Selma Dubnick.

10

00:00:41,850 --> 00:00:46,710

We are privileged to welcome
Mr. Henry Butensky, a liberator

11

00:00:46,710 --> 00:00:50,670

presently living in Roseland
who has generously volunteered

12

00:00:50,670 --> 00:00:54,690
to give testimony about
his military experience

13
00:00:54,690 --> 00:00:58,950
and his witnessing of the
liberation of the concentration

14
00:00:58,950 --> 00:01:00,150
camps.

15
00:01:00,150 --> 00:01:02,800
Mr. Butensky, I'd
like to welcome you,

16
00:01:02,800 --> 00:01:06,150
and I'd like to begin
by asking you to tell us

17
00:01:06,150 --> 00:01:10,850
a little bit about
your own background,

18
00:01:10,850 --> 00:01:13,350
where you came
from, your formative

19
00:01:13,350 --> 00:01:17,300
experiences prior to the war.

20
00:01:17,300 --> 00:01:21,300
Well, I was born in
Harlem, in New York

21
00:01:21,300 --> 00:01:27,810
City, which was a Jewish
community in those days.

22
00:01:27,810 --> 00:01:31,650
And after two years,
when I was two years old,

23
00:01:31,650 --> 00:01:35,970

my family decided to move
up to the Bronx, New York.

24
00:01:35,970 --> 00:01:38,880
Well, we did, and we lived
there for many, many years

25
00:01:38,880 --> 00:01:45,890
after, spending most of my
life there, going to school,

26
00:01:45,890 --> 00:01:48,600
to James Monroe
High School, then

27
00:01:48,600 --> 00:01:52,350
going to work in my father's
little shop down on the East

28
00:01:52,350 --> 00:01:55,380
Side off Delancey Street,
taking the subway train day in

29
00:01:55,380 --> 00:01:57,450
and day out.

30
00:01:57,450 --> 00:02:01,560
We had quite a
beautiful Jewish home.

31
00:02:01,560 --> 00:02:04,260
My mother, aleha hashalom,
may she rest in peace,

32
00:02:04,260 --> 00:02:09,900
was a saintly woman, and
we were seven children,

33
00:02:09,900 --> 00:02:13,770
five brothers, two sisters.

34
00:02:13,770 --> 00:02:19,290
We were brought up together in

a religiously-oriented home.

35

00:02:19,290 --> 00:02:21,870

My father was a cantor.

36

00:02:21,870 --> 00:02:29,930

And things were pretty
good up until around 1930

37

00:02:29,930 --> 00:02:34,140

when, as everybody
else in the country,

38

00:02:34,140 --> 00:02:39,490

we also looked for ways to make
a living and make ends meet.

39

00:02:39,490 --> 00:02:43,480

And things were turned a
little bit not so good,

40

00:02:43,480 --> 00:02:49,130

but our home was kept intact
all through those tough years.

41

00:02:49,130 --> 00:02:55,610

And my mother kept a
beautiful Jewish home.

42

00:02:55,610 --> 00:02:57,390

They came from Palestine.

43

00:02:57,390 --> 00:03:01,700

My other brothers and sisters
were born in Jerusalem.

44

00:03:01,700 --> 00:03:05,690

I was the first one who
was born in this country.

45

00:03:05,690 --> 00:03:08,660

And my early childhood--

46

00:03:08,660 --> 00:03:13,220

I remember it as a very
pleasant, beautiful time

47

00:03:13,220 --> 00:03:16,820

with normal teenage problems,
as every kid has, and so on.

48

00:03:16,820 --> 00:03:19,120

I was athletically inclined.

49

00:03:19,120 --> 00:03:21,050

I liked to play a
lot of baseball.

50

00:03:21,050 --> 00:03:23,810

I played some football.

51

00:03:23,810 --> 00:03:29,150

But I loved to sing, and it
seemed that, from the time

52

00:03:29,150 --> 00:03:32,120

I was about five
years old, I was

53

00:03:32,120 --> 00:03:34,250

singing with all
the great cantors

54

00:03:34,250 --> 00:03:38,630

of that time around the Bronx,
and Brooklyn, and so on.

55

00:03:38,630 --> 00:03:41,880

And I loved to sing
in the synagogue,

56

00:03:41,880 --> 00:03:45,440

and I knew, somehow, somewhere,
that someday, perhaps,

57

00:03:45,440 --> 00:03:47,660
that I, too, might
become a cantor.

58
00:03:47,660 --> 00:03:50,820
That was in the back of my
mind, although I was going

59
00:03:50,820 --> 00:03:54,410
to try everything else before.

60
00:03:54,410 --> 00:03:59,780
But the war came about,
and the rumblings in Europe

61
00:03:59,780 --> 00:04:05,230
started, of course, with the
Kristallnacht in 1933 or '34.

62
00:04:05,230 --> 00:04:06,722
I don't remember exact time.

63
00:04:06,722 --> 00:04:08,055
'38, I think, was Kristallnacht.

64
00:04:08,055 --> 00:04:09,310
Or '38, rather, yes.

65
00:04:09,310 --> 00:04:14,100
It was 1933, '34 when Hitler
got into the beginnings,

66
00:04:14,100 --> 00:04:21,920
but '38, with Kristallnacht and
Jews starting to be persecuted,

67
00:04:21,920 --> 00:04:28,460
my home was a hotbed of
discussion, and talk,

68
00:04:28,460 --> 00:04:31,360
and so on because we
had relatives in Europe.

69

00:04:31,360 --> 00:04:34,310

And some were coming here,
and they had all kinds

70

00:04:34,310 --> 00:04:36,680

of stories to tell and so on.

71

00:04:36,680 --> 00:04:41,870

They told about, in Warsaw, the
Jewish bench in the schools,

72

00:04:41,870 --> 00:04:44,240

where some of my
cousins were not allowed

73

00:04:44,240 --> 00:04:45,530

to go to school and so on.

74

00:04:45,530 --> 00:04:50,000

But anyhow, we were exposed
to a lot of the rumblings

75

00:04:50,000 --> 00:04:53,510

and a lot of the groaning
that was taking place

76

00:04:53,510 --> 00:04:57,080

in Europe at that
time, to the point

77

00:04:57,080 --> 00:05:01,430

that even I, in
1940, decided that I

78

00:05:01,430 --> 00:05:03,260

was going to join the army.

79

00:05:03,260 --> 00:05:05,930

But of course, my parents
wouldn't hear of it,

80

00:05:05,930 --> 00:05:07,460
and they wouldn't
let me volunteer.

81
00:05:07,460 --> 00:05:09,890
I was only 18 at the time.

82
00:05:09,890 --> 00:05:12,410
But two years later, I
was drafted into the army

83
00:05:12,410 --> 00:05:18,600
anyway at the age of 20 in 1942,
and I was sent into the army.

84
00:05:18,600 --> 00:05:21,920
That you heard about what
was going on in Europe

85
00:05:21,920 --> 00:05:23,630
at that time, in the 30s--

86
00:05:23,630 --> 00:05:27,140

87
00:05:27,140 --> 00:05:31,340
was there widespread concern in
the Jewish community in which

88
00:05:31,340 --> 00:05:37,640
you lived, or did people
tend to dismiss it and think

89
00:05:37,640 --> 00:05:43,380
of it as something aberrant or
odd that would come to an or--

90
00:05:43,380 --> 00:05:45,440
Well, in my particular
case, I had a cousin

91
00:05:45,440 --> 00:05:48,800
who married a European woman.

92
00:05:48,800 --> 00:05:51,450
He was in the First World
War in the American army.

93
00:05:51,450 --> 00:05:53,030
He was an American
citizen, but he

94
00:05:53,030 --> 00:05:56,840
married this Jewish
Polish woman in Warsaw.

95
00:05:56,840 --> 00:06:00,350
And he had a child who
was born in the States,

96
00:06:00,350 --> 00:06:02,530
but she wanted to go
back to her homeland.

97
00:06:02,530 --> 00:06:03,710
They went back to Warsaw.

98
00:06:03,710 --> 00:06:07,763
But he was a traveling salesman
between Europe and the United

99
00:06:07,763 --> 00:06:09,680
States, and when he came
to the United States,

100
00:06:09,680 --> 00:06:13,230
he would stay in my own because
he loved kosher cooking and so

101
00:06:13,230 --> 00:06:13,730
on.

102
00:06:13,730 --> 00:06:15,560
So he stayed in our home.

103

00:06:15,560 --> 00:06:17,750
And actually, every evening
we'd sit around a table,

104
00:06:17,750 --> 00:06:21,440
and we'd ask questions, and
questions, and questions.

105
00:06:21,440 --> 00:06:24,740
So he was pretty
informative about what

106
00:06:24,740 --> 00:06:27,230
was going on in Europe.

107
00:06:27,230 --> 00:06:29,690
Subsequently, his whole
family-- the complete family

108
00:06:29,690 --> 00:06:32,300
was wiped out, but he
saved the one boy, Jackie,

109
00:06:32,300 --> 00:06:35,840
who got to England and
finally came to my home

110
00:06:35,840 --> 00:06:39,800
and then was brought up with us
as, practically, an adopted son

111
00:06:39,800 --> 00:06:43,280
and stayed with us from
1940 on, until we all

112
00:06:43,280 --> 00:06:44,420
got married and so on.

113
00:06:44,420 --> 00:06:48,380
But there wasn't an
apathy, but I think

114
00:06:48,380 --> 00:06:50,300

that everybody was concerned.

115

00:06:50,300 --> 00:06:54,020

And we all knew sort of
what was going on, not 100%,

116

00:06:54,020 --> 00:06:56,390

but we heard it through
different people who

117

00:06:56,390 --> 00:06:59,540

came back and told us stories
and told us this and that.

118

00:06:59,540 --> 00:07:03,260

But for some reason,
we just didn't

119

00:07:03,260 --> 00:07:07,130

know what we could do about
it, and that, I think,

120

00:07:07,130 --> 00:07:07,790

was the thing.

121

00:07:07,790 --> 00:07:09,770

We just had nothing to do.

122

00:07:09,770 --> 00:07:13,940

We just couldn't help in any
way except through meetings,

123

00:07:13,940 --> 00:07:16,400

and protest meetings, and so on.

124

00:07:16,400 --> 00:07:18,200

But those of us in
the Jewish community--

125

00:07:18,200 --> 00:07:19,980

and I remember when
I was a youngster--

126

00:07:19,980 --> 00:07:23,030

I was 17 or 18 at the time--

127

00:07:23,030 --> 00:07:25,180

from the different

Hebrew high schools

128

00:07:25,180 --> 00:07:28,910

and Jewish organizations, we

went out, and we protested.

129

00:07:28,910 --> 00:07:31,880

And we used to go to the

German section, around

130

00:07:31,880 --> 00:07:35,030

80-some-odd Street,

Yorkville section.

131

00:07:35,030 --> 00:07:36,770

And on Sunday morning,

when the kids--

132

00:07:36,770 --> 00:07:40,340

I remember so vividly.

133

00:07:40,340 --> 00:07:42,920

The German kids would

pile into trucks

134

00:07:42,920 --> 00:07:46,670

with their little uniforms

with the swastikas on them

135

00:07:46,670 --> 00:07:49,010

and the brown shirts,

and we Jewish kids--

136

00:07:49,010 --> 00:07:52,990

we were 20 kids against 200.

137

00:07:52,990 --> 00:07:55,220

And we would stop them,
and try to fight them,

138
00:07:55,220 --> 00:07:57,210
and pick arguments
with them, and so on.

139
00:07:57,210 --> 00:07:59,050
This was our little
bit that we could do,

140
00:07:59,050 --> 00:08:02,090
but I don't know if generally,
over the whole Jewish

141
00:08:02,090 --> 00:08:05,180
community, whether there
was anything, really,

142
00:08:05,180 --> 00:08:08,090
that they could do
about it at the time.

143
00:08:08,090 --> 00:08:12,290
What do you remember of the
press response, the media

144
00:08:12,290 --> 00:08:17,640
response of that time,
radio, newspapers, magazines?

145
00:08:17,640 --> 00:08:18,900
I don't remember too much.

146
00:08:18,900 --> 00:08:22,620
The Jewish press,
The Forward, had

147
00:08:22,620 --> 00:08:28,400
quite a bit about the
European situation

148
00:08:28,400 --> 00:08:29,410

and what was happening.

149

00:08:29,410 --> 00:08:30,480

They did.

150

00:08:30,480 --> 00:08:36,860

We listened a lot to WEVD
with the Jewish commentators.

151

00:08:36,860 --> 00:08:38,260

They spoke about it.

152

00:08:38,260 --> 00:08:42,900

Rabbis spoke about
it in their sermons.

153

00:08:42,900 --> 00:08:45,630

I don't remember too much
in the American press,

154

00:08:45,630 --> 00:08:50,370

in the English paper, whether
they had a heck of a lot

155

00:08:50,370 --> 00:08:56,550

about it, except I do
remember the plight of the--

156

00:08:56,550 --> 00:08:59,280

I think it was
the St. Louis that

157

00:08:59,280 --> 00:09:05,400

was sent back from the
shores with 900 refugees

158

00:09:05,400 --> 00:09:11,040

aboard that, unfortunately,
President Roosevelt didn't

159

00:09:11,040 --> 00:09:14,790

accept because of Cordell
Hull and so on when

160
00:09:14,790 --> 00:09:16,560
he was asked to bring them in.

161
00:09:16,560 --> 00:09:20,610
I think I remember that
in the papers, yes.

162
00:09:20,610 --> 00:09:25,230
Something specific
like Kristallnacht--

163
00:09:25,230 --> 00:09:28,390
were you aware of the
fact that it was going on?

164
00:09:28,390 --> 00:09:30,460
Yeah, we heard about it.

165
00:09:30,460 --> 00:09:33,540
I heard about
Kristallnacht in 1938.

166
00:09:33,540 --> 00:09:35,290
We knew about it.

167
00:09:35,290 --> 00:09:42,600
And most of us felt that
all Jews should get out,

168
00:09:42,600 --> 00:09:43,680
but how to get them out--

169
00:09:43,680 --> 00:09:46,970
I don't know if we
knew how to do that,

170
00:09:46,970 --> 00:09:51,000
and I don't know, even,
if all the Jews in Europe

171
00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:53,130

wanted to get out
because they thought

172
00:09:53,130 --> 00:09:57,720
maybe it would just blow over
and it would be just a passing

173
00:09:57,720 --> 00:09:58,990
thing.

174
00:09:58,990 --> 00:10:02,130
Of course, we know better
now, but at the time,

175
00:10:02,130 --> 00:10:06,090
I'm sure that many, many Jews,
even hundreds of thousands

176
00:10:06,090 --> 00:10:10,290
of them, could have got
out but chose to stay,

177
00:10:10,290 --> 00:10:11,873
and it would blow
over, and pass over,

178
00:10:11,873 --> 00:10:12,957
and that would be the end.

179
00:10:12,957 --> 00:10:14,100
But we did hear about it.

180
00:10:14,100 --> 00:10:14,910
We knew about it.

181
00:10:14,910 --> 00:10:19,200
Did you have any fears
as an American Jew

182
00:10:19,200 --> 00:10:22,290
as to what was happening
to the Jews in Europe

183

00:10:22,290 --> 00:10:25,500

and whether there
was anything that

184

00:10:25,500 --> 00:10:31,020

could be done through the
State Department or any fears

185

00:10:31,020 --> 00:10:36,060

that some of this could
spill over to American Jews?

186

00:10:36,060 --> 00:10:39,720

I think when I was--

187

00:10:39,720 --> 00:10:45,360

those days, I don't think
that the American Jew

188

00:10:45,360 --> 00:10:51,370

had the kind of clout or felt
that he had the kind of clout,

189

00:10:51,370 --> 00:10:56,050

except maybe for Rabbi Stephen
Wise, or Hillel Silver,

190

00:10:56,050 --> 00:10:57,490

or something like
that, who might

191

00:10:57,490 --> 00:11:00,460

have had some kind of input--

192

00:11:00,460 --> 00:11:03,430

but aside from them, I don't
think the Jewish community

193

00:11:03,430 --> 00:11:06,970

had a lot of clout with
the State Department

194

00:11:06,970 --> 00:11:15,610
or the government in any way
so that forceful things could

195
00:11:15,610 --> 00:11:18,880
be done like they have today.

196
00:11:18,880 --> 00:11:20,600
Today it's a little
bit different.

197
00:11:20,600 --> 00:11:21,400
You have a pact.

198
00:11:21,400 --> 00:11:23,920
You have organizations.

199
00:11:23,920 --> 00:11:28,180
You have organized Jewish
communities together.

200
00:11:28,180 --> 00:11:31,975
In those days, it didn't exist.

201
00:11:31,975 --> 00:11:33,100
So we were kind of fearful.

202
00:11:33,100 --> 00:11:36,260
We knew that if
something wasn't going

203
00:11:36,260 --> 00:11:41,500
to be done within a short period
of time, that the Jews would--

204
00:11:41,500 --> 00:11:42,820
we didn't know to what extent.

205
00:11:42,820 --> 00:11:45,130
Who could ever imagine
that six million Jews were

206

00:11:45,130 --> 00:11:46,130
going to be killed?

207
00:11:46,130 --> 00:11:51,460
Who thought that anybody in the
world would do such a thing?

208
00:11:51,460 --> 00:11:53,890
Yeah, we thought they
would beat them up.

209
00:11:53,890 --> 00:11:57,190
Maybe they would not let
them into the schools, which

210
00:11:57,190 --> 00:12:00,070
we knew that there were special
benches for Jews to sit,

211
00:12:00,070 --> 00:12:03,300
and some couldn't get into
high schools, gymnasium,

212
00:12:03,300 --> 00:12:04,880
and colleges, and so on.

213
00:12:04,880 --> 00:12:07,830
They wouldn't be allowed
to be professionals.

214
00:12:07,830 --> 00:12:09,760
But we accepted that.

215
00:12:09,760 --> 00:12:13,660
So Jews have a way of becoming
professional in their own way,

216
00:12:13,660 --> 00:12:20,110
but whoever thought that such
a thing as a daily desecration

217
00:12:20,110 --> 00:12:22,990
of human lives would happen,

putting people in ovens?

218

00:12:22,990 --> 00:12:26,550

Whoever believed that any
such thing could ever happen?

219

00:12:26,550 --> 00:12:36,610

How did the broadcasts and
speeches of people like Gerald

220

00:12:36,610 --> 00:12:39,730

LK Smith, Father Coughlin,
people like that who were very

221

00:12:39,730 --> 00:12:44,170

instrumental in spreading
anti-Semitism in those days--

222

00:12:44,170 --> 00:12:47,470

how did that affect you
and your contemporaries?

223

00:12:47,470 --> 00:12:48,970

Did you see them
as a viable threat?

224

00:12:48,970 --> 00:12:53,290

But you've got to remember
that we lived in New York City.

225

00:12:53,290 --> 00:12:56,050

New York City had a
powerful Jewish community

226

00:12:56,050 --> 00:12:59,830

of about two million Jews
out of about five or six

227

00:12:59,830 --> 00:13:04,840

million people, so when
they came to Madison Square

228

00:13:04,840 --> 00:13:09,490

Garden and places like that,
the Jewish war veterans

229
00:13:09,490 --> 00:13:17,650
of World War I and other
Jewish groups took to it,

230
00:13:17,650 --> 00:13:24,430
and went with bodily
force, and caused protests.

231
00:13:24,430 --> 00:13:25,690
But that was the extent of it.

232
00:13:25,690 --> 00:13:27,910
The rest of the country--

233
00:13:27,910 --> 00:13:29,800
I don't know in those
days if there was maybe

234
00:13:29,800 --> 00:13:32,110
three or four million Jews
in this country altogether.

235
00:13:32,110 --> 00:13:34,720
And two million of them
were in New York City,

236
00:13:34,720 --> 00:13:38,390
so the rest were spread
out all over the country.

237
00:13:38,390 --> 00:13:40,570
And I'm sure that
through the Bible Belt

238
00:13:40,570 --> 00:13:44,620
and down the South and Midwest
that Jews would have rather

239
00:13:44,620 --> 00:13:48,310
kept quiet because they

were in such a minority

240
00:13:48,310 --> 00:13:49,810
that they wouldn't
even, sometimes,

241
00:13:49,810 --> 00:13:52,577
want to know the people
that they are Jews.

242
00:13:52,577 --> 00:13:54,410
In New York City, it
was a little different.

243
00:13:54,410 --> 00:13:57,460
We had a big Jewish
community, many synagogues.

244
00:13:57,460 --> 00:13:59,740
Anti-Semitism wasn't rampant.

245
00:13:59,740 --> 00:14:01,420
The Jews were merchants.

246
00:14:01,420 --> 00:14:05,350
That Jews were of
stature, doctors, lawyers,

247
00:14:05,350 --> 00:14:07,880
professionals, and
everything like that.

248
00:14:07,880 --> 00:14:11,200
So there was less
fear of anti-Semitism,

249
00:14:11,200 --> 00:14:15,580
but the rest of the country
had something to worry about,

250
00:14:15,580 --> 00:14:17,320
definitely.

251

00:14:17,320 --> 00:14:20,020

Let's get back to
your joining the army.

252

00:14:20,020 --> 00:14:23,000

You mentioned that
your family resisted.

253

00:14:23,000 --> 00:14:26,040

Were any of your brothers--

254

00:14:26,040 --> 00:14:26,540

No.

255

00:14:26,540 --> 00:14:28,240

Did they want to join it, too?

256

00:14:28,240 --> 00:14:30,210

Well, my kid brother--

257

00:14:30,210 --> 00:14:32,650

the one after me was
14 years older than me,

258

00:14:32,650 --> 00:14:36,310

so there was a big
gap between him and I

259

00:14:36,310 --> 00:14:39,010

because they came to this
country in 1920 and son on.

260

00:14:39,010 --> 00:14:42,280

I was born-- anyhow, but my kid
brother was three years younger

261

00:14:42,280 --> 00:14:44,360

than me, so he was a kid.

262

00:14:44,360 --> 00:14:47,060

And I was the only one
of any age and so on.

263

00:14:47,060 --> 00:14:52,420

And I wanted to join the army
because, if there was anything

264

00:14:52,420 --> 00:14:58,000

that I feared personally, it
was to end up in the infantry

265

00:14:58,000 --> 00:15:02,040

and be a mud-slugging soldier.

266

00:15:02,040 --> 00:15:04,540

I wanted to avoid that, and I
said, gee, if I join the army,

267

00:15:04,540 --> 00:15:07,000

I can get into the Air Force,
and I'll be the Air Force.

268

00:15:07,000 --> 00:15:11,860

I won't be a fly, so I'll
fix airplanes or whatever.

269

00:15:11,860 --> 00:15:17,020

But it didn't work, and I ended
up in the infantry anyway,

270

00:15:17,020 --> 00:15:21,580

being drafted two years later.

271

00:15:21,580 --> 00:15:23,770

Where did you go
after your training?

272

00:15:23,770 --> 00:15:26,500

273

00:15:26,500 --> 00:15:30,240

In 1942, I trained in a
camp in North Carolina

274

00:15:30,240 --> 00:15:32,410
then ended up in--

275
00:15:32,410 --> 00:15:36,940
joined my outfit in Camp
Van Dorn, Mississippi.

276
00:15:36,940 --> 00:15:39,550
And then once our
unit was formed,

277
00:15:39,550 --> 00:15:42,310
we went up to Colorado
for mountain training.

278
00:15:42,310 --> 00:15:46,310
And then we went across to
California for training jumping

279
00:15:46,310 --> 00:15:50,060
off LST boats and into
the water with full pack

280
00:15:50,060 --> 00:15:52,770
and so on and so forth.

281
00:15:52,770 --> 00:15:55,280
But it turned, out after
we finished the training--

282
00:15:55,280 --> 00:15:57,680
we thought surely we're going
to the South Pacific, which

283
00:15:57,680 --> 00:15:58,430
I dreaded.

284
00:15:58,430 --> 00:16:00,740
I wanted to go to Europe.

285
00:16:00,740 --> 00:16:04,040
But they called out all the
non-commissioned officers.

286
00:16:04,040 --> 00:16:07,370
I was a corporal at the time,
and they called all of us

287
00:16:07,370 --> 00:16:10,940
out and said, only
the privates and PFCs

288
00:16:10,940 --> 00:16:12,320
would go to the South Pacific.

289
00:16:12,320 --> 00:16:14,210
The rest of us went
back to Fort Benning

290
00:16:14,210 --> 00:16:19,950
to form the 71st Division
training to go to Europe,

291
00:16:19,950 --> 00:16:23,120
so I ended up going
to Europe anyway.

292
00:16:23,120 --> 00:16:24,875
And this 71st
Division later became

293
00:16:24,875 --> 00:16:26,000
attached to the Third Army.

294
00:16:26,000 --> 00:16:26,500
Is that--

295
00:16:26,500 --> 00:16:29,750
Yes, we became attached
to the Third Army when--

296
00:16:29,750 --> 00:16:33,110
first, we were in the 7th
Army with General Patch,

297

00:16:33,110 --> 00:16:36,290
and at the time,
General Patton decided

298
00:16:36,290 --> 00:16:38,540
that he would make the
push through to Berlin

299
00:16:38,540 --> 00:16:39,420
and he would go.

300
00:16:39,420 --> 00:16:41,150
He said, if you give
me the men, I'll go.

301
00:16:41,150 --> 00:16:44,420
So we were transferred from
the 7th Army to the Third Army,

302
00:16:44,420 --> 00:16:46,280
and then from then
we went straight

303
00:16:46,280 --> 00:16:49,220
through to the end of the war.

304
00:16:49,220 --> 00:16:53,120
Did you have a preference
for going to Europe?

305
00:16:53,120 --> 00:16:54,980
I did, yeah.

306
00:16:54,980 --> 00:16:58,130
I wanted to go to Europe.

307
00:16:58,130 --> 00:17:01,650
I wanted to go to Europe
because, first of all,

308
00:17:01,650 --> 00:17:06,349
I felt that maybe, somehow
I could have something

309
00:17:06,349 --> 00:17:10,849
to do with helping
the Jewish population.

310
00:17:10,849 --> 00:17:13,069
That was in the back of my mind.

311
00:17:13,069 --> 00:17:17,530

312
00:17:17,530 --> 00:17:23,400
But I felt the South Pacific
was just not my war--

313
00:17:23,400 --> 00:17:25,020
I don't know, for some reason--

314
00:17:25,020 --> 00:17:28,928
that Europe was my war
and not the South Pacific.

315
00:17:28,928 --> 00:17:29,720
Were any of these--

316
00:17:29,720 --> 00:17:34,700
Japan didn't have that
anti-Semitic tone to it,

317
00:17:34,700 --> 00:17:36,640
which it really didn't.

318
00:17:36,640 --> 00:17:37,410
And Germany did.

319
00:17:37,410 --> 00:17:44,570
I got such a hate on for
Germany and for Europe.

320
00:17:44,570 --> 00:17:46,040
That's why I felt
that I wanted--

321
00:17:46,040 --> 00:17:47,790
It was very personal for you?

322
00:17:47,790 --> 00:17:48,420
Yeah.

323
00:17:48,420 --> 00:17:51,270
Were any members of your
family, even distant members,

324
00:17:51,270 --> 00:17:53,590
left behind in Europe?

325
00:17:53,590 --> 00:17:58,350
My cousin, Willie Feldman,
who served in World War I

326
00:17:58,350 --> 00:18:04,470
as an American, married a
European woman from Warsaw,

327
00:18:04,470 --> 00:18:06,870
from Poland.

328
00:18:06,870 --> 00:18:08,820
They had some children.

329
00:18:08,820 --> 00:18:12,570
One child was born
in the States,

330
00:18:12,570 --> 00:18:16,380
and he was maybe a year old when
they packed up and went back

331
00:18:16,380 --> 00:18:17,700
to Warsaw.

332
00:18:17,700 --> 00:18:20,740
She wanted to be
near her family.

333

00:18:20,740 --> 00:18:24,957

Her father was a pharmacist
in Warsaw, and they went back.

334

00:18:24,957 --> 00:18:26,790

And they lived what,
from what I understand,

335

00:18:26,790 --> 00:18:29,400

was a very nice life, but
my cousin, Willie-- he

336

00:18:29,400 --> 00:18:33,510

traveled between the
United States and Europe,

337

00:18:33,510 --> 00:18:37,380

and he was a representative
of sewing machines and things

338

00:18:37,380 --> 00:18:39,810

like that.

339

00:18:39,810 --> 00:18:43,740

So when this all started,
around 1939, 1940,

340

00:18:43,740 --> 00:18:49,620

when Poland surrendered
and was wiped out,

341

00:18:49,620 --> 00:18:56,700

he managed to get his son, the
one who was an American, out.

342

00:18:56,700 --> 00:18:59,850

The rest of the family
was wiped out completely.

343

00:18:59,850 --> 00:19:04,140

His wife, the other child,
some of my other cousins

344
00:19:04,140 --> 00:19:06,960
who were there were
all-- well, we never

345
00:19:06,960 --> 00:19:12,060
heard from them or about
them in any way again.

346
00:19:12,060 --> 00:19:15,720
But he came to the country,
to the United States,

347
00:19:15,720 --> 00:19:19,770
through England and here,
and the boy, Jackie,

348
00:19:19,770 --> 00:19:22,800
was taken into our home
and then lived with us

349
00:19:22,800 --> 00:19:25,230
for many, many years,
until he got married

350
00:19:25,230 --> 00:19:27,590
and went out of the house.

351
00:19:27,590 --> 00:19:31,350
But his father, this Willie,
remained with my father--

352
00:19:31,350 --> 00:19:34,190
they had an apartment
in the Bronx--

353
00:19:34,190 --> 00:19:40,028
until 1971, when my father--

354
00:19:40,028 --> 00:19:46,380
my father passed away in 1971,
and so they were together

355

00:19:46,380 --> 00:19:47,310
all those years.

356

00:19:47,310 --> 00:19:50,340

357

00:19:50,340 --> 00:19:53,400
When you got to Europe,
in what countries did

358

00:19:53,400 --> 00:19:57,060
you go into with the Army.

359

00:19:57,060 --> 00:20:00,840
We started from
Camp Old Gold, which

360

00:20:00,840 --> 00:20:09,390
was a camp that brought units
together, an activating camp,

361

00:20:09,390 --> 00:20:11,760
and it was in France.

362

00:20:11,760 --> 00:20:13,550
It was not far from Le Havre.

363

00:20:13,550 --> 00:20:14,765
We landed in Le Havre.

364

00:20:14,765 --> 00:20:17,740

365

00:20:17,740 --> 00:20:22,740
You got to remember, this
was right immediately

366

00:20:22,740 --> 00:20:26,070
at the end of the
Battle of the Bulge,

367

00:20:26,070 --> 00:20:29,100
which was December of '44.

368
00:20:29,100 --> 00:20:35,840
And we were hustled
into the front lines

369
00:20:35,840 --> 00:20:39,030
as the tail end of that
Battle of the Bulge,

370
00:20:39,030 --> 00:20:43,500
and that's when it started
the push towards Europe,

371
00:20:43,500 --> 00:20:47,040
towards Berlin and so on.

372
00:20:47,040 --> 00:20:50,040
As a Jewish soldier,
how were you

373
00:20:50,040 --> 00:20:56,250
treated in your battalion,
both at home and abroad?

374
00:20:56,250 --> 00:20:58,650
Do you have any
memories of that?

375
00:20:58,650 --> 00:21:00,930
Yeah.

376
00:21:00,930 --> 00:21:09,810
Jews, according to the
higher-ups in the infantry,

377
00:21:09,810 --> 00:21:14,140
were not supposed to be in
the infantry, or so they said.

378
00:21:14,140 --> 00:21:15,440
Why?

379

00:21:15,440 --> 00:21:19,740

Well, they said Jews were
better-equipped, probably,

380

00:21:19,740 --> 00:21:23,230

mentally to take better tests
and get into the higher--

381

00:21:23,230 --> 00:21:30,420

into Signal Corps outfits,
into the Air Force outfits,

382

00:21:30,420 --> 00:21:32,700

and things like that.

383

00:21:32,700 --> 00:21:34,200

But they were
mistaken because there

384

00:21:34,200 --> 00:21:36,690

were many, many Jews,
although my company only

385

00:21:36,690 --> 00:21:38,120

had two Jewish--

386

00:21:38,120 --> 00:21:40,175

myself and another Jewish boy.

387

00:21:40,175 --> 00:21:45,300

But there were plenty Jewish
boys in the infantry, too.

388

00:21:45,300 --> 00:21:49,500

I can't say that I encountered
any open anti-Semitism.

389

00:21:49,500 --> 00:21:53,180

Whatever anti-Semitism
there was in my surroundings

390

00:21:53,180 --> 00:21:54,075
was kind of subtle.

391
00:21:54,075 --> 00:21:58,920

392
00:21:58,920 --> 00:22:03,930
But they couldn't
deny me, personally,

393
00:22:03,930 --> 00:22:09,450
my rank and my stripes
being promoted and so on

394
00:22:09,450 --> 00:22:18,060
because I took to the army
and I took to it with a--

395
00:22:18,060 --> 00:22:23,168
a zeal exactly but knowing
that, hey, look, I'm here,

396
00:22:23,168 --> 00:22:24,960
I'm going to make the
best it, and whatever

397
00:22:24,960 --> 00:22:29,970
I'm going to do I'm going to do
the best job I know how to do.

398
00:22:29,970 --> 00:22:34,950
As a matter of fact, before I
left for the army, my father,

399
00:22:34,950 --> 00:22:39,620
who, of course, was not
articulate in English--

400
00:22:39,620 --> 00:22:43,280
but in Yiddish, we
sat, and we discussed.

401
00:22:43,280 --> 00:22:47,850

And I asked him about
my tfillin and the food.

402
00:22:47,850 --> 00:22:49,892
I said, after all, Pop,
I'm going to have this.

403
00:22:49,892 --> 00:22:50,850
I'm going to have that.

404
00:22:50,850 --> 00:22:54,660
He says to me, look, you eat
whatever you have to eat.

405
00:22:54,660 --> 00:22:56,460
Do whatever you have to do.

406
00:22:56,460 --> 00:22:59,760
If you can put on your tfillin
in the morning, put them on.

407
00:22:59,760 --> 00:23:02,350
If you can't put them on,
you won't put them on.

408
00:23:02,350 --> 00:23:06,160
He says, you're in the army, I
want you to be a good soldier.

409
00:23:06,160 --> 00:23:07,830
That he expressed to me.

410
00:23:07,830 --> 00:23:09,380
He said, I want you to be--

411
00:23:09,380 --> 00:23:11,460
he said, I want to
be proud of you,

412
00:23:11,460 --> 00:23:13,890
and I want you to be
proud of yourself.

413

00:23:13,890 --> 00:23:16,500

And although he was
not a talkative man--

414

00:23:16,500 --> 00:23:19,140

415

00:23:19,140 --> 00:23:26,620

but a few days before I went,
we had this little talk,

416

00:23:26,620 --> 00:23:31,230

which was enough for me
to know what I had to do.

417

00:23:31,230 --> 00:23:34,560

And that was about it.

418

00:23:34,560 --> 00:23:36,390

Did you have a chaplain?

419

00:23:36,390 --> 00:23:37,600

I did.

420

00:23:37,600 --> 00:23:40,190

At the beginning, I
did go to the-- it

421

00:23:40,190 --> 00:23:46,260

was a Reform rabbi
who did his best

422

00:23:46,260 --> 00:23:49,110

to try to get the Jewish
kids to come to the services.

423

00:23:49,110 --> 00:23:50,340

He wasn't successful.

424

00:23:50,340 --> 00:23:54,420

I went a few times, but
many the kids didn't.

425
00:23:54,420 --> 00:23:56,220
We didn't find it--

426
00:23:56,220 --> 00:23:57,300
it wasn't stimulating.

427
00:23:57,300 --> 00:24:01,320
It was just a service of
repeating words and so on,

428
00:24:01,320 --> 00:24:08,520
which I, personally,
didn't need because I was

429
00:24:08,520 --> 00:24:11,940
a synagogue-oriented person.

430
00:24:11,940 --> 00:24:16,800
But there wasn't discussions
and things like that, which--

431
00:24:16,800 --> 00:24:20,220
I was kind of disappointed,
so after a while,

432
00:24:20,220 --> 00:24:26,070
I didn't go to
services in the army.

433
00:24:26,070 --> 00:24:28,800
And then overseas,
we had one chaplain.

434
00:24:28,800 --> 00:24:32,100
He was a Catholic chaplain,
and he was the chaplain

435
00:24:32,100 --> 00:24:36,490
for our whole unit.

436
00:24:36,490 --> 00:24:41,550

Father Gwenevin was his
name, a fine, fine man

437
00:24:41,550 --> 00:24:45,480
who respected all religions
and even forced me,

438
00:24:45,480 --> 00:24:48,392
one time, before
Pesach-- he says,

439
00:24:48,392 --> 00:24:49,850
you know your
holiday is coming up.

440
00:24:49,850 --> 00:24:51,330
I says, I know, I know.

441
00:24:51,330 --> 00:24:53,868
Where are you going to get
matzas and this and that?

442
00:24:53,868 --> 00:24:54,660
All right, he says.

443
00:24:54,660 --> 00:24:58,813
But at least he says,
remember your holiday.

444
00:24:58,813 --> 00:24:59,480
Don't eat bread.

445
00:24:59,480 --> 00:25:03,150
And he does-- so
he was quite a guy,

446
00:25:03,150 --> 00:25:07,270
and I respected
him a lot for it.

447
00:25:07,270 --> 00:25:10,970
At what point did your battalion
start going into Germany,

448
00:25:10,970 --> 00:25:14,890
and what was it like for you?

449
00:25:14,890 --> 00:25:18,460
We started in
France, encountering

450
00:25:18,460 --> 00:25:20,170
some heavy resistance yet.

451
00:25:20,170 --> 00:25:22,840
In France, there was.

452
00:25:22,840 --> 00:25:23,980
We went through Nancy.

453
00:25:23,980 --> 00:25:26,170
We went through
a few other towns

454
00:25:26,170 --> 00:25:28,600
that I can't
remember their names.

455
00:25:28,600 --> 00:25:36,040
But then there was a point
of a town called Bitche.

456
00:25:36,040 --> 00:25:41,980
B-I-T-C-H-E was the name of
the city, the town, village.

457
00:25:41,980 --> 00:25:46,000
It was on the
Siegfried Line, which

458
00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:52,930
was a tremendous line of defense
that the Germans had put up.

459
00:25:52,930 --> 00:25:56,320

It was supposed to be
impregnable, just one

460
00:25:56,320 --> 00:25:58,360
of those that keep the
tanks out, of course,

461
00:25:58,360 --> 00:26:04,750
and we forced our
way into that place.

462
00:26:04,750 --> 00:26:06,700
And from then on, again,
we crossed the Rhine

463
00:26:06,700 --> 00:26:09,260
and the little pontoon boats.

464
00:26:09,260 --> 00:26:11,860
We spent one night in a--

465
00:26:11,860 --> 00:26:16,330
in the big IG Farben
industry works.

466
00:26:16,330 --> 00:26:18,920
We slept there, which
was on the Rhine.

467
00:26:18,920 --> 00:26:21,190
It was the town
called Ludwigshafen.

468
00:26:21,190 --> 00:26:24,390
It was located-- we crossed
the Rhine at that point.

469
00:26:24,390 --> 00:26:28,750
Was the IG Farben
plant in operation?

470
00:26:28,750 --> 00:26:30,940
Part of it was in operation.

471
00:26:30,940 --> 00:26:33,030
We really didn't know
because we came in there.

472
00:26:33,030 --> 00:26:34,613
Everything was
already-- but you could

473
00:26:34,613 --> 00:26:37,450
see it was freshly-- papers
were strewn all around,

474
00:26:37,450 --> 00:26:43,010
and it looked like somebody
was there a few days before.

475
00:26:43,010 --> 00:26:48,520
But we got in there, and
our outfit took that plant.

476
00:26:48,520 --> 00:26:52,240
And then we went on, and
we crossed the Rhine.

477
00:26:52,240 --> 00:26:55,540
And from then on, it
was a daily operation.

478
00:26:55,540 --> 00:27:00,490
We were attached
to a tank corps.

479
00:27:00,490 --> 00:27:05,750
I don't remember the number,
the division, the tank,

480
00:27:05,750 --> 00:27:09,565
but the General Patton
put us on these tanks

481
00:27:09,565 --> 00:27:15,430
and made us go on the

tanks as they went through.

482

00:27:15,430 --> 00:27:18,340

He wanted the infantry to
be along with the tanks,

483

00:27:18,340 --> 00:27:20,650

and as the tanks
spearheaded through,

484

00:27:20,650 --> 00:27:24,670

the infantry got off the
tanks and got into the woods

485

00:27:24,670 --> 00:27:28,330

to clean up the small
pockets of SS troops.

486

00:27:28,330 --> 00:27:32,950

There were a lot of Hitlerjugend
kids, 12, 14, 15-year-old kids,

487

00:27:32,950 --> 00:27:36,640

who were defending, and
fighting, and so on.

488

00:27:36,640 --> 00:27:41,770

They were given arms
and all kinds of arms,

489

00:27:41,770 --> 00:27:43,960

weapons to deal with.

490

00:27:43,960 --> 00:27:47,470

I brought a couple of things
home from the Hitlerjungend

491

00:27:47,470 --> 00:27:49,300

that we took away
from them and so on.

492

00:27:49,300 --> 00:27:53,650

So they were causing us a lot

of aggravation, not heavy,

493

00:27:53,650 --> 00:27:57,800

heavy-duty fighting

but a lot of--

494

00:27:57,800 --> 00:27:58,300

Skirmishes?

495

00:27:58,300 --> 00:27:59,710

--skirmishes.

496

00:27:59,710 --> 00:28:05,440

And my company lost quite a

few guys just in skirmishing.

497

00:28:05,440 --> 00:28:10,660

But we went through, and

we started going through--

498

00:28:10,660 --> 00:28:16,000

we were already going into

Austria and into that--

499

00:28:16,000 --> 00:28:17,590

I think we were the--

500

00:28:17,590 --> 00:28:22,120

our division was the

farthest east division

501

00:28:22,120 --> 00:28:25,330

of any division in the country.

502

00:28:25,330 --> 00:28:29,320

We met the Russians in Austria--

503

00:28:29,320 --> 00:28:31,030

it was the Inn River--

504

00:28:31,030 --> 00:28:35,980

probably three or four

days before the surrender

505

00:28:35,980 --> 00:28:37,300

of Germany.

506

00:28:37,300 --> 00:28:40,060

I think the war was over

May the 5th or the 6th,

507

00:28:40,060 --> 00:28:43,660

and we met them, I think, on May

the 1st, something like that.

508

00:28:43,660 --> 00:28:46,570

509

00:28:46,570 --> 00:28:52,864

At this time, had you seen any

of the camps or any of the--

510

00:28:52,864 --> 00:28:57,300

either the labor camps

or concentration camps?

511

00:28:57,300 --> 00:28:59,010

Yeah.

512

00:28:59,010 --> 00:29:05,230

Well, my first

exposure to the camps--

513

00:29:05,230 --> 00:29:07,843

although we'd heard about them--

514

00:29:07,843 --> 00:29:09,010

How did you hear about them?

515

00:29:09,010 --> 00:29:17,060

We heard about them through

the grapevine, so to speak,

516

00:29:17,060 --> 00:29:22,660

the people that brought
us, some information.

517
00:29:22,660 --> 00:29:27,110
Hey, there are camps, not
specifically Jewish camps.

518
00:29:27,110 --> 00:29:29,530
We didn't know
exactly about that,

519
00:29:29,530 --> 00:29:40,600
but we heard that Germany
had a specific program

520
00:29:40,600 --> 00:29:47,020
of annihilation of human
beings, Jews especially.

521
00:29:47,020 --> 00:29:49,390
I think most of the
guys, even the non-Jews,

522
00:29:49,390 --> 00:29:52,480
knew that Jewish
people were being

523
00:29:52,480 --> 00:29:54,370
annihilated and destroyed.

524
00:29:54,370 --> 00:29:57,610
We didn't know
exactly by what means.

525
00:29:57,610 --> 00:30:02,230
We didn't know too much
about the ovens, and the gas

526
00:30:02,230 --> 00:30:04,930
chambers, and things like that.

527
00:30:04,930 --> 00:30:08,740
We didn't know about

that until after.

528

00:30:08,740 --> 00:30:11,740

As a matter of fact,
immediately, as the war ended,

529

00:30:11,740 --> 00:30:16,390

my division brought all the GIs
into theaters all over there

530

00:30:16,390 --> 00:30:20,020

and showed them the
pictures of the destruction

531

00:30:20,020 --> 00:30:24,550

of the human people in
the concentration camps.

532

00:30:24,550 --> 00:30:26,660

It was a horrible,
horrible sight.

533

00:30:26,660 --> 00:30:28,130

So this was your
first sight of--

534

00:30:28,130 --> 00:30:33,940

So my first time that I was
exposed was in a labor camp.

535

00:30:33,940 --> 00:30:36,300

It wasn't the death camp.

536

00:30:36,300 --> 00:30:42,400

It was a labor camp
in Wels of Austria.

537

00:30:42,400 --> 00:30:45,680

And my company took
this big building,

538

00:30:45,680 --> 00:30:47,230

and I walked into the building.

539
00:30:47,230 --> 00:30:49,810
And in the building,
I saw barracks

540
00:30:49,810 --> 00:30:53,320
with bunk beds, probably
six, seven high.

541
00:30:53,320 --> 00:30:56,470
The place was filthy.

542
00:30:56,470 --> 00:30:58,930
There was a stench.

543
00:30:58,930 --> 00:31:03,010
I almost couldn't stand
there, but I was there.

544
00:31:03,010 --> 00:31:08,380
And I could see lice
jumping all over the place,

545
00:31:08,380 --> 00:31:12,430
from the heads of
the people and all.

546
00:31:12,430 --> 00:31:14,780
And then one man came
over to talk to me,

547
00:31:14,780 --> 00:31:18,880
and I was pretty adept at
speaking German because I

548
00:31:18,880 --> 00:31:21,160
knew Yiddish very well.

549
00:31:21,160 --> 00:31:23,750
So I could sort of-- it was
compatible, and I could speak.

550

00:31:23,750 --> 00:31:27,100
So I started speaking German
to him, and he spoke to me.

551
00:31:27,100 --> 00:31:28,690
I could tell the
way he spoke German

552
00:31:28,690 --> 00:31:31,190
that he was as bad as I was.

553
00:31:31,190 --> 00:31:32,230
So I asked him plane.

554
00:31:32,230 --> 00:31:36,160
I said, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]
in Yiddish.

555
00:31:36,160 --> 00:31:39,850
And when he heard that,
he jumped all over me,

556
00:31:39,850 --> 00:31:42,610
and he started speaking Yiddish.

557
00:31:42,610 --> 00:31:43,900
He was a Jew.

558
00:31:43,900 --> 00:31:46,780
So the camp had about
2,000 people there.

559
00:31:46,780 --> 00:31:50,170
They were strictly working
making packages out

560
00:31:50,170 --> 00:31:52,745
of wood, wood boxes
and stuff for material.

561
00:31:52,745 --> 00:31:55,480

562

00:31:55,480 --> 00:31:59,070

But there was about
200 or 300 Jews there,

563

00:31:59,070 --> 00:32:01,800

too, men and women, and so on.

564

00:32:01,800 --> 00:32:04,660

And a place was just a filth.

565

00:32:04,660 --> 00:32:08,280

What was the condition
of the people there?

566

00:32:08,280 --> 00:32:12,580

Emaciated, not quite the way
we found them in the camps

567

00:32:12,580 --> 00:32:19,720

later on, but they were given
a minimal of food, some slush

568

00:32:19,720 --> 00:32:23,620

and maybe a soup every day,
to keep them because they

569

00:32:23,620 --> 00:32:25,050

used them as a workforce.

570

00:32:25,050 --> 00:32:28,010

So they had to keep them alive,
and they worked, they said,

571

00:32:28,010 --> 00:32:29,980

12, 14, 15 hours a day.

572

00:32:29,980 --> 00:32:31,610

All day long they worked.

573

00:32:31,610 --> 00:32:34,690

Were they close in age
or physical condition

574

00:32:34,690 --> 00:32:39,158
to each other, or did they tend
to be more young or much older?

575

00:32:39,158 --> 00:32:41,200
I would say that these--
no, these weren't young.

576

00:32:41,200 --> 00:32:45,090
These people were mostly--

577

00:32:45,090 --> 00:32:50,650
the man that I spoke to, I would
say, was probably in his 40s.

578

00:32:50,650 --> 00:32:55,060
I would say that most of the
people there were between 40,

579

00:32:55,060 --> 00:32:58,120
50, something like that,
and they were probably

580

00:32:58,120 --> 00:33:00,600
in the peak of their health.

581

00:33:00,600 --> 00:33:01,740
So they might have just--

582

00:33:01,740 --> 00:33:03,610
You didn't see any
young adolescents?

583

00:33:03,610 --> 00:33:07,610
I didn't see any
young kids there, no.

584

00:33:07,610 --> 00:33:08,110
All adults?

585

00:33:08,110 --> 00:33:09,580

I didn't see that.

586
00:33:09,580 --> 00:33:12,110
So that was my first exposure.

587
00:33:12,110 --> 00:33:16,360
And we tried to help them out,
and I went back to my shift

588
00:33:16,360 --> 00:33:17,540
in the army.

589
00:33:17,540 --> 00:33:20,800
And then my outfit-- we got
some food together and so on.

590
00:33:20,800 --> 00:33:23,890
We left them a bag of food,
everything and anything

591
00:33:23,890 --> 00:33:26,800
that we could possibly
get a hold of.

592
00:33:26,800 --> 00:33:32,290
And we brought it to
him, and he distributed

593
00:33:32,290 --> 00:33:37,330
I would say, to his Jewish
friends first, I guess.

594
00:33:37,330 --> 00:33:38,590
And that was it.

595
00:33:38,590 --> 00:33:39,950
I spent that day there.

596
00:33:39,950 --> 00:33:42,870
Then we kept on going.

597
00:33:42,870 --> 00:33:45,420

You told us earlier that
he hugged you, that he--

598
00:33:45,420 --> 00:33:48,170
Yes, he did.

599
00:33:48,170 --> 00:33:50,350
When he heard that I was
a Jew, he came to me,

600
00:33:50,350 --> 00:33:53,040
and he took me around.

601
00:33:53,040 --> 00:33:55,090
And at first, I was a
little bit reluctant

602
00:33:55,090 --> 00:33:58,900
because he had rashes on
his hands and his face,

603
00:33:58,900 --> 00:34:01,720
and the lice was gone.

604
00:34:01,720 --> 00:34:05,590
And I was-- not that
I was much cleaner.

605
00:34:05,590 --> 00:34:09,040
We were in mud places,
too, but at least we

606
00:34:09,040 --> 00:34:11,340
could wash a little and so on.

607
00:34:11,340 --> 00:34:13,480
But then I said--

608
00:34:13,480 --> 00:34:15,940
and I hugged him, and
we hugged each other.

609

00:34:15,940 --> 00:34:17,414
And that's the way it was.

610
00:34:17,414 --> 00:34:20,409

611
00:34:20,409 --> 00:34:25,159
And we got him as much
food as we possibly could,

612
00:34:25,159 --> 00:34:26,710
and I had to leave.

613
00:34:26,710 --> 00:34:34,389
But I'm sure it was a heartening
visit, both for him and for me,

614
00:34:34,389 --> 00:34:37,520
that he knew that the Americans,
first of all, were there,

615
00:34:37,520 --> 00:34:42,489
and, hey, there was a Jew,
also, one of his brothers,

616
00:34:42,489 --> 00:34:44,199
in the army.

617
00:34:44,199 --> 00:34:48,429
Did he mention to you
how recently the Germans

618
00:34:48,429 --> 00:34:50,980
who were in charge of
that labor camp had fled?

619
00:34:50,980 --> 00:34:56,250
Yeah, they had fled only
hours and a day before, yeah.

620
00:34:56,250 --> 00:34:57,420
Do you know where they were?

621

00:34:57,420 --> 00:34:57,920

No.

622

00:34:57,920 --> 00:34:58,992

You never found them?

623

00:34:58,992 --> 00:34:59,492

No.

624

00:34:59,492 --> 00:35:02,230

625

00:35:02,230 --> 00:35:05,230

And then where did you go?

626

00:35:05,230 --> 00:35:12,670

We went on, and we
came into another camp.

627

00:35:12,670 --> 00:35:16,310

This was some days later.

628

00:35:16,310 --> 00:35:24,880

We came upon a camp called
Straubing in Austria,

629

00:35:24,880 --> 00:35:34,120

and there we saw
the horrors of what

630

00:35:34,120 --> 00:35:40,250

we had heard about previously
through the grapevine.

631

00:35:40,250 --> 00:35:45,140

It became an open book
for us because there we

632

00:35:45,140 --> 00:35:50,720

saw the bodies lying
massacred and decimated

633

00:35:50,720 --> 00:35:54,050
by hunger and starvation.

634

00:35:54,050 --> 00:35:57,710
We had heard about
the striped uniforms

635

00:35:57,710 --> 00:36:05,480
that they were made to wear,
and we saw it up front,

636

00:36:05,480 --> 00:36:07,610
the way it was told.

637

00:36:07,610 --> 00:36:10,700
That's what we saw.

638

00:36:10,700 --> 00:36:16,730
And there were many, many
hundreds, some in trenches.

639

00:36:16,730 --> 00:36:21,270
I think the Germans
were trying to cover up,

640

00:36:21,270 --> 00:36:24,890
so they threw the bodies
into open trenches.

641

00:36:24,890 --> 00:36:27,590
I guess they didn't
have time to cover them.

642

00:36:27,590 --> 00:36:29,690
They didn't have the
machinery, the bulldozers

643

00:36:29,690 --> 00:36:31,688
or whatever they
were going to do.

644

00:36:31,688 --> 00:36:32,980

There was just not enough time.

645

00:36:32,980 --> 00:36:38,210

I don't think that they thought
that the American army was

646

00:36:38,210 --> 00:36:40,130

that close or that able.

647

00:36:40,130 --> 00:36:42,890

They thought, perhaps,
that their army was still

648

00:36:42,890 --> 00:36:48,660

strong enough to defend and keep
the American forces from coming

649

00:36:48,660 --> 00:36:50,240

in.

650

00:36:50,240 --> 00:36:54,090

Had you any idea how recently
they had been killed?

651

00:36:54,090 --> 00:36:56,750

The people there?

652

00:36:56,750 --> 00:37:01,843

From the reports of the--

653

00:37:01,843 --> 00:37:03,260

as a matter of
fact, there was a--

654

00:37:03,260 --> 00:37:07,910

I was very friendly with
the battalion doctor, who

655

00:37:07,910 --> 00:37:11,780

traveled with us, our
headquarters battalion doctor,

656

00:37:11,780 --> 00:37:12,920
and I had spoken to him.

657
00:37:12,920 --> 00:37:14,940
I was a first sergeant
at the time already,

658
00:37:14,940 --> 00:37:17,990
so I was in charge of the
administration of the company

659
00:37:17,990 --> 00:37:21,020
and seeing that the company
was fed, and got their weapons,

660
00:37:21,020 --> 00:37:22,280
and got their ammunition.

661
00:37:22,280 --> 00:37:27,650
And I was sort of the right-hand
man of our company commander,

662
00:37:27,650 --> 00:37:31,550
Captain Graham, and
so I was sort of

663
00:37:31,550 --> 00:37:35,400
privy to some of the inside
that they were discussing about.

664
00:37:35,400 --> 00:37:41,630
And the doctor was saying
that perhaps they died the day

665
00:37:41,630 --> 00:37:43,550
before or something like that.

666
00:37:43,550 --> 00:37:48,150

667
00:37:48,150 --> 00:37:52,410
It's possible, and I
can't prove it until now.

668
00:37:52,410 --> 00:37:57,580
At the time, I didn't
do any detective work.

669
00:37:57,580 --> 00:38:00,690
The was not my line.

670
00:38:00,690 --> 00:38:04,470
But it's possible that the
Germans just indiscriminately

671
00:38:04,470 --> 00:38:06,780
killed out as many
as they possibly

672
00:38:06,780 --> 00:38:11,130
could because in the next
camp that we came to,

673
00:38:11,130 --> 00:38:17,670
which was Gunskirchen
Lager some miles away,

674
00:38:17,670 --> 00:38:21,120
we found the bodies in the
woods, a distance away,

675
00:38:21,120 --> 00:38:25,350
probably a few hundred
yards, from their barracks.

676
00:38:25,350 --> 00:38:29,670
So we were wondering, why
weren't they in their barracks?

677
00:38:29,670 --> 00:38:31,820
Why out in the woods?

678
00:38:31,820 --> 00:38:37,020
They covered up hundreds,
and hundreds, and hundreds

679

00:38:37,020 --> 00:38:38,520
of bodies, probably thousands.

680

00:38:38,520 --> 00:38:41,550
I saw-- my perception
at the time was--

681

00:38:41,550 --> 00:38:46,650

682

00:38:46,650 --> 00:38:50,130
And they said that
what happened was

683

00:38:50,130 --> 00:38:55,320
that the victims, the
inmates of the camp

684

00:38:55,320 --> 00:38:58,890
knew that the
Americans were coming,

685

00:38:58,890 --> 00:39:03,660
some said within the
hours, within a day,

686

00:39:03,660 --> 00:39:05,880
and they started running
out to the woods,

687

00:39:05,880 --> 00:39:12,600
thinking that if they stayed
behind they would be wiped out.

688

00:39:12,600 --> 00:39:15,100
So they started running
towards freedom,

689

00:39:15,100 --> 00:39:18,810
I believe, and I think that
there were machine-gunned down

690

00:39:18,810 --> 00:39:23,220
in the woods and just
left there at the time.

691
00:39:23,220 --> 00:39:26,190
In either of the camps,
did you see any people

692
00:39:26,190 --> 00:39:27,630
who were still alive?

693
00:39:27,630 --> 00:39:31,530
Yes, we saw some that
were still alive,

694
00:39:31,530 --> 00:39:34,380
but the ones that I came
upon that were still alive

695
00:39:34,380 --> 00:39:37,870
were really incoherent.

696
00:39:37,870 --> 00:39:44,910
And I spoke to one man in
Yiddish, and he was in a daze.

697
00:39:44,910 --> 00:39:46,080
He didn't know--

698
00:39:46,080 --> 00:39:49,500
I couldn't get from
him where he came from.

699
00:39:49,500 --> 00:39:53,850
One man said he
was from Lithuania.

700
00:39:53,850 --> 00:39:58,590
Another person I saw
said he was from Poland.

701
00:39:58,590 --> 00:40:02,640
It was very difficult to talk.

702
00:40:02,640 --> 00:40:04,800
How many were there,
would you estimate?

703
00:40:04,800 --> 00:40:05,640
That were alive?

704
00:40:05,640 --> 00:40:06,210
Yes.

705
00:40:06,210 --> 00:40:07,030
Alive?

706
00:40:07,030 --> 00:40:07,530
Yes.

707
00:40:07,530 --> 00:40:08,550
I guess there were many.

708
00:40:08,550 --> 00:40:10,350
I wouldn't say--
there were probably

709
00:40:10,350 --> 00:40:15,750
hundreds that were alive,
but we were on the go.

710
00:40:15,750 --> 00:40:19,920
It wasn't my company's
function to go

711
00:40:19,920 --> 00:40:25,725
through the detective work
in the concentration camps.

712
00:40:25,725 --> 00:40:28,410

713
00:40:28,410 --> 00:40:33,030
Within an hour or two, we had
to jump on tanks and keep going,

714

00:40:33,030 --> 00:40:36,750

and it was left for
some outfits behind us

715

00:40:36,750 --> 00:40:39,180

to come in and do
that kind of work.

716

00:40:39,180 --> 00:40:42,820

How did the men in your unit
react when they came upon this?

717

00:40:42,820 --> 00:40:48,630

With a lot of sympathy.

718

00:40:48,630 --> 00:41:00,330

At that time, I think, had the
state of Israel been a fact

719

00:41:00,330 --> 00:41:06,870

or at least been in the
works like it was in 1948,

720

00:41:06,870 --> 00:41:11,280

I think the American people
at the time would have got up

721

00:41:11,280 --> 00:41:15,590

and fought for a
Jewish homeland.

722

00:41:15,590 --> 00:41:18,390

It was very strong.

723

00:41:18,390 --> 00:41:22,440

The guys in my outfit came to
me, knowing that I'm a Jew--

724

00:41:22,440 --> 00:41:26,670

and I never hid the fact--
and this other boy, Goodman,

725

00:41:26,670 --> 00:41:33,000

Michael, who was a radio
operator in my outfit.

726

00:41:33,000 --> 00:41:40,140

And we both talked together,
one Jew to another, and many

727

00:41:40,140 --> 00:41:42,510

of the guys came over
and said, gee, we never

728

00:41:42,510 --> 00:41:47,250

knew that your people had
to go through so much.

729

00:41:47,250 --> 00:41:50,130

And they were very sympathetic.

730

00:41:50,130 --> 00:41:53,140

And these were all
young men in their 20s.

731

00:41:53,140 --> 00:41:54,720

I was only 23 myself.

732

00:41:54,720 --> 00:41:59,080

They were 24, 25, 26, and so on.

733

00:41:59,080 --> 00:42:05,820

So these were guys who were
hardened, tough infantry boys,

734

00:42:05,820 --> 00:42:09,030

went through a lot of this
war and saw a lot of death.

735

00:42:09,030 --> 00:42:12,450

We saw a lot of American
boys, a lot of Germans--

736

00:42:12,450 --> 00:42:16,020

we saw a lot of
death going through,

737
00:42:16,020 --> 00:42:19,890
but I think this moved
them, that people were just

738
00:42:19,890 --> 00:42:25,431
slaughtered just
for being Jewish.

739
00:42:25,431 --> 00:42:29,010
Were there any Germans left
in either of these camps?

740
00:42:29,010 --> 00:42:31,595
If there were, I
didn't see them.

741
00:42:31,595 --> 00:42:35,750
There was some, but
I didn't see them.

742
00:42:35,750 --> 00:42:38,780
I didn't get near
the barracks at all.

743
00:42:38,780 --> 00:42:41,590
What I saw was
strictly in the woods,

744
00:42:41,590 --> 00:42:46,160
that we came upon them,
the bodies and then

745
00:42:46,160 --> 00:42:51,620
a few stragglers who were
walking, who were alive.

746
00:42:51,620 --> 00:42:53,870
But I never got far in.

747
00:42:53,870 --> 00:42:57,740

There was a few hundred
yards back where the offices,

748
00:42:57,740 --> 00:43:00,270
I guess, and the barracks,
and the buildings were.

749
00:43:00,270 --> 00:43:03,290
And I never got to
that, so I don't

750
00:43:03,290 --> 00:43:04,820
know if there were
any Germans who

751
00:43:04,820 --> 00:43:08,810
had given up and stayed
behind, or tried to explain,

752
00:43:08,810 --> 00:43:09,950
or whatever.

753
00:43:09,950 --> 00:43:15,050
This was for the troops
that came up after us to do.

754
00:43:15,050 --> 00:43:17,390
We just kept on going.

755
00:43:17,390 --> 00:43:21,980
If you can characterize
the response--

756
00:43:21,980 --> 00:43:24,390
you said they were very
sympathetic, and you said--

757
00:43:24,390 --> 00:43:28,340
The boys in my outfit were, yes.

758
00:43:28,340 --> 00:43:30,650
Were they able to
talk about this,

759
00:43:30,650 --> 00:43:37,760
or was this sense of
sympathy or identification

760
00:43:37,760 --> 00:43:40,490
sort of within each one?

761
00:43:40,490 --> 00:43:41,270
Were they silent?

762
00:43:41,270 --> 00:43:45,080
Did they speak to
each other about it?

763
00:43:45,080 --> 00:43:59,230
Yeah, I think it was a kind
of a subtle correspondence

764
00:43:59,230 --> 00:44:02,510
that they had, but
it was not vocal.

765
00:44:02,510 --> 00:44:07,840
But as a first sergeant,
my job was, besides

766
00:44:07,840 --> 00:44:10,840
running the outfit--

767
00:44:10,840 --> 00:44:12,820
I had just gotten
in replacements

768
00:44:12,820 --> 00:44:17,650
who were kids that came from the
States, and the last two weeks

769
00:44:17,650 --> 00:44:24,090
or so was their first
baptism of fire, so to speak.

770

00:44:24,090 --> 00:44:30,460
And so it was my job, also, to
calm these 18-year-old kids who

771
00:44:30,460 --> 00:44:32,380
had just come from
the States, and they

772
00:44:32,380 --> 00:44:37,590
were poured into the front
lines without even ever hearing

773
00:44:37,590 --> 00:44:40,870
a bomb go off, or an airplane
strafing, or anything

774
00:44:40,870 --> 00:44:43,490
like that.

775
00:44:43,490 --> 00:44:45,400
So I used to get
around to my company,

776
00:44:45,400 --> 00:44:49,900
and I always had this
thing of getting up,

777
00:44:49,900 --> 00:44:51,790
either with a Jeep or
whatever, to get up

778
00:44:51,790 --> 00:44:54,730
to the front lines
with the guys,

779
00:44:54,730 --> 00:44:58,000
maybe running in-- if we
got some rations of candy,

780
00:44:58,000 --> 00:45:00,970
or cigarettes, and so on, I'd
bring them up for the boys

781

00:45:00,970 --> 00:45:02,920
and spread them out,
here, this and that.

782
00:45:02,920 --> 00:45:05,680

783
00:45:05,680 --> 00:45:12,040
And so I tried to get around,
calm the company down because,

784
00:45:12,040 --> 00:45:16,690
at one time, at one point,
American planes piloted

785
00:45:16,690 --> 00:45:19,630
by German pilots-- they were
captured planes-- opened fire

786
00:45:19,630 --> 00:45:20,290
on our company.

787
00:45:20,290 --> 00:45:24,460
So they almost didn't know if
the Americans shoot-- but they

788
00:45:24,460 --> 00:45:26,950
captured two or three P-38s.

789
00:45:26,950 --> 00:45:28,840
I think it was P-51s.

790
00:45:28,840 --> 00:45:30,940
I don't remember the
number of the plane.

791
00:45:30,940 --> 00:45:33,492
And they had our planes,
and they opened up strafing.

792
00:45:33,492 --> 00:45:34,200
And here we were.

793

00:45:34,200 --> 00:45:38,890

We were standing out
there saying, hey,

794

00:45:38,890 --> 00:45:40,020

there's our planes.

795

00:45:40,020 --> 00:45:40,990

There's our boys.

796

00:45:40,990 --> 00:45:43,480

And all of a sudden, they
opened up fire and so on.

797

00:45:43,480 --> 00:45:47,420

So I used to get around, and
try to calm the kids down,

798

00:45:47,420 --> 00:45:50,420

and tell them, hey, look,
don't worry about it,

799

00:45:50,420 --> 00:45:52,140

make sure that they
dug their foxholes.

800

00:45:52,140 --> 00:45:54,030

Some of them were--
they were afraid,

801

00:45:54,030 --> 00:45:57,680

especially the young ones,
and there was a lot of fear

802

00:45:57,680 --> 00:46:01,120

and so on, which
was understandable.

803

00:46:01,120 --> 00:46:05,770

I had the same fear myself,
and I was afraid every minute.

804

00:46:05,770 --> 00:46:09,580
But I couldn't show it because
I had to put on a front.

805
00:46:09,580 --> 00:46:13,570
They'd say, the first
sergeant is crawling away,

806
00:46:13,570 --> 00:46:15,810
so what do they want from us?

807
00:46:15,810 --> 00:46:17,900
So it was that kind of a thing.

808
00:46:17,900 --> 00:46:23,710
But as I went around, a lot of
them spoke about, said, gee,

809
00:46:23,710 --> 00:46:26,170
we never thought that
anything like that

810
00:46:26,170 --> 00:46:30,370
went on, that there was
that kind of destruction.

811
00:46:30,370 --> 00:46:37,662
They said to me-- and they did
whisper and speak about some--

812
00:46:37,662 --> 00:46:39,160
and they were sympathetic.

813
00:46:39,160 --> 00:46:43,390
I must say that a lot of
them, although they weren't

814
00:46:43,390 --> 00:46:48,460
vocal and outgoing
in their protest,

815
00:46:48,460 --> 00:46:54,620
they did express their feelings

about what was going on.

816

00:46:54,620 --> 00:46:58,040

And I think it
created, at that time,

817

00:46:58,040 --> 00:47:09,210

a very sympathetic feeling
for the Jews, period,

818

00:47:09,210 --> 00:47:15,950

and perhaps that's why
the study of the Holocaust

819

00:47:15,950 --> 00:47:21,260

and the recognition of the
Holocaust, among the majority--

820

00:47:21,260 --> 00:47:24,200

there's still a minority that
want to say that it never

821

00:47:24,200 --> 00:47:27,990

existed, but those guys
who say that never--

822

00:47:27,990 --> 00:47:35,360

cannot tell the 200 guys in my
outfit that it never existed

823

00:47:35,360 --> 00:47:37,025

because they saw it.

824

00:47:37,025 --> 00:47:39,150

And so there's no such
thing that it never existed.

825

00:47:39,150 --> 00:47:42,290

826

00:47:42,290 --> 00:47:48,090

Did you know about
the major camps,

827
00:47:48,090 --> 00:47:54,900
to use a word that is really
not appropriate in this context?

828
00:47:54,900 --> 00:47:55,858
But I'm talking about--

829
00:47:55,858 --> 00:47:57,233
Dachau, and
Auschwitz, and so no.

830
00:47:57,233 --> 00:47:59,520
--Auschwitz and Dachau,
and Treblinka, and places

831
00:47:59,520 --> 00:48:01,260
like that, the death camps.

832
00:48:01,260 --> 00:48:06,990
OK, the only thing that I
know about that is not--

833
00:48:06,990 --> 00:48:08,760
if you want my own
personal experience,

834
00:48:08,760 --> 00:48:11,460
I have none with
that whatsoever.

835
00:48:11,460 --> 00:48:16,860
I had no experience with any of
the major concentration camps,

836
00:48:16,860 --> 00:48:18,570
except the two
that I spoke about,

837
00:48:18,570 --> 00:48:22,680
Straubing and Gunskirchen,
which not only had Jews in it

838

00:48:22,680 --> 00:48:26,400

but had other
political prisoners

839

00:48:26,400 --> 00:48:29,370

and so on in the camps.

840

00:48:29,370 --> 00:48:32,280

It wasn't strictly
a Jewish death camp

841

00:48:32,280 --> 00:48:35,920

as Auschwitz may be or Dachau.

842

00:48:35,920 --> 00:48:40,620

The only connection that I
had with Auschwitz and Dachau

843

00:48:40,620 --> 00:48:45,990

is that, after the war,
after I got married,

844

00:48:45,990 --> 00:48:51,660

we became very, very close
friends, even to this day,

845

00:48:51,660 --> 00:48:56,440

with a man and his wife.

846

00:48:56,440 --> 00:49:01,560

She was from
Europe, from Poland,

847

00:49:01,560 --> 00:49:05,330

but they managed to escape
the concentration camps.

848

00:49:05,330 --> 00:49:09,600

But they wandered from
one town to another.

849

00:49:09,600 --> 00:49:14,490

But Joe himself is a product
of the Warsaw ghetto.

850
00:49:14,490 --> 00:49:17,970
He was in the Warsaw
Uprising and eventually

851
00:49:17,970 --> 00:49:24,360
landed in Auschwitz, in
the concentration lager

852
00:49:24,360 --> 00:49:27,240
and lucky enough to get out.

853
00:49:27,240 --> 00:49:32,250
And we became very friendly
on a personal basis with them,

854
00:49:32,250 --> 00:49:37,680
and their family, who were
close to our age and--

855
00:49:37,680 --> 00:49:40,200
we lived near each
other, and their children

856
00:49:40,200 --> 00:49:43,440
were the friends of my children.

857
00:49:43,440 --> 00:49:51,750
And to this day, 35 years later
than when we met them in 1953,

858
00:49:51,750 --> 00:49:54,210
we're still friends to this day.

859
00:49:54,210 --> 00:49:56,190
And I don't want to
mention his name,

860
00:49:56,190 --> 00:50:00,820
but he's very active with the
Holocaust program in New York.

861
00:50:00,820 --> 00:50:04,260
He's a very prominent
man, and he's

862
00:50:04,260 --> 00:50:07,710
on the board of
those organizations.

863
00:50:07,710 --> 00:50:12,630
And to this day-- we were
just together Sunday night.

864
00:50:12,630 --> 00:50:15,000
We were together
at a bat mitzvah.

865
00:50:15,000 --> 00:50:18,690
One of the other family's
daughter got bat mitzvahed.

866
00:50:18,690 --> 00:50:23,190
And so we were
there, and he spoke--

867
00:50:23,190 --> 00:50:25,890
and on a personal basis,
we would sit and talk,

868
00:50:25,890 --> 00:50:27,460
the two of us.

869
00:50:27,460 --> 00:50:31,530
Through many, many years,
we used to speak about it.

870
00:50:31,530 --> 00:50:33,780
Of course, in those days,
when he first came to this--

871
00:50:33,780 --> 00:50:37,260
he couldn't speak English
very well, so he found me.

872

00:50:37,260 --> 00:50:42,570

And I was a Yiddishist,
and I could speak Yiddish.

873

00:50:42,570 --> 00:50:45,630

And we were very
good, close friends.

874

00:50:45,630 --> 00:50:48,330

We went all over together,
vacations together, summers

875

00:50:48,330 --> 00:50:52,450

with our kids to the
mountains, and so on.

876

00:50:52,450 --> 00:50:58,170

And many times, we sat,
and talked, and discussed,

877

00:50:58,170 --> 00:51:07,140

and he did tell me some
experiences of his in Auschwitz

878

00:51:07,140 --> 00:51:10,140

and in the concentration camps.

879

00:51:10,140 --> 00:51:15,330

To go through the whole story
is just a horrible, horrible

880

00:51:15,330 --> 00:51:20,290

experience that he went
through that he told me about.

881

00:51:20,290 --> 00:51:24,840

882

00:51:24,840 --> 00:51:28,920

He did things that
we wouldn't even

883

00:51:28,920 --> 00:51:36,590
believe human beings could do,
he himself, that he did things.

884

00:51:36,590 --> 00:51:45,140
The man is a passive, good,
philanthropic human being,

885

00:51:45,140 --> 00:51:48,230
but he had to do
things as a young man--

886

00:51:48,230 --> 00:51:50,660
he was only in
his 20s, I guess--

887

00:51:50,660 --> 00:51:55,680

888

00:51:55,680 --> 00:51:57,065
that only an animal--

889

00:51:57,065 --> 00:51:59,600

890

00:51:59,600 --> 00:52:02,930
a human being that has
animal instincts would do.

891

00:52:02,930 --> 00:52:05,870
And he had to do certain things.

892

00:52:05,870 --> 00:52:09,950
He expressed to me things,
the horrors of the camp

893

00:52:09,950 --> 00:52:15,140
and how they chose
who was going to die,

894

00:52:15,140 --> 00:52:16,670
and who was going

to live, and who

895

00:52:16,670 --> 00:52:18,980
was going to the
gas chamber, and who

896

00:52:18,980 --> 00:52:20,880
was going to take a shower.

897

00:52:20,880 --> 00:52:26,060
And it was just a horrible
thing that I listened

898

00:52:26,060 --> 00:52:30,790
to for many, many sessions
that we used to speak about,

899

00:52:30,790 --> 00:52:35,320
and they weren't very nice.

900

00:52:35,320 --> 00:52:37,790
I've heard several
liberators say,

901

00:52:37,790 --> 00:52:40,400
as, certainly, many
survivors have said,

902

00:52:40,400 --> 00:52:48,290
that they found it very
difficult to talk to people

903

00:52:48,290 --> 00:52:52,410
about what they had seen.

904

00:52:52,410 --> 00:52:57,700
Even though the liberators
didn't experience those things,

905

00:52:57,700 --> 00:53:00,900
many held back for
many years before they

906

00:53:00,900 --> 00:53:03,330

could come forward and even
talk to their own families

907

00:53:03,330 --> 00:53:04,900

about these things.

908

00:53:04,900 --> 00:53:06,598

Many had nightmares.

909

00:53:06,598 --> 00:53:07,890

Did you experience any of this?

910

00:53:07,890 --> 00:53:09,515

I was just thinking
about that, Bernie,

911

00:53:09,515 --> 00:53:11,305

because it's ironic you should--

912

00:53:11,305 --> 00:53:13,230

the same thing has
happened to me.

913

00:53:13,230 --> 00:53:16,890

914

00:53:16,890 --> 00:53:18,870

I got in the army.

915

00:53:18,870 --> 00:53:20,850

I did what I felt was--

916

00:53:20,850 --> 00:53:26,390

I served an honorable almost
four years in the army.

917

00:53:26,390 --> 00:53:28,680

I came to be a first sergeant.

918

00:53:28,680 --> 00:53:29,580

I worked my way up.

919

00:53:29,580 --> 00:53:33,300

It wasn't easy for a
Jewish boy in the infantry.

920

00:53:33,300 --> 00:53:34,590

I came home.

921

00:53:34,590 --> 00:53:35,370

I got married.

922

00:53:35,370 --> 00:53:36,287

I have three children.

923

00:53:36,287 --> 00:53:38,540

924

00:53:38,540 --> 00:53:43,320

Do you know that, all
through the years,

925

00:53:43,320 --> 00:53:54,550

I have never, never discussed
my experiences with my kids.

926

00:53:54,550 --> 00:53:57,030

I don't know why.

927

00:53:57,030 --> 00:54:00,400

Either it was too hard
for me to tell them,

928

00:54:00,400 --> 00:54:07,140

or somewhere they were
reluctant to ask me.

929

00:54:07,140 --> 00:54:09,640

I had my army
uniform hanging down

930

00:54:09,640 --> 00:54:14,020

in the basement with ribbons,
and battle stars, and infantry

931
00:54:14,020 --> 00:54:15,960
badge, and everything.

932
00:54:15,960 --> 00:54:21,160
Not one of my kids ever asked
me what did I do in the war.

933
00:54:21,160 --> 00:54:26,230
But I have this book
from my division,

934
00:54:26,230 --> 00:54:29,050
and it was in the
basement, in my basement

935
00:54:29,050 --> 00:54:32,350
where we lived for 25 years.

936
00:54:32,350 --> 00:54:38,920
And it got flooded, and that
book landed in the water

937
00:54:38,920 --> 00:54:44,050
and completely
immersed in water.

938
00:54:44,050 --> 00:54:47,715
Well, we dug it out
and put it aside.

939
00:54:47,715 --> 00:54:50,330

940
00:54:50,330 --> 00:54:55,270
But my son, who is
now 27, my baby boy--

941
00:54:55,270 --> 00:54:57,650
I guess this was about
eight or nine years ago.

942
00:54:57,650 --> 00:54:58,750
He was maybe 20.

943
00:54:58,750 --> 00:55:02,590
Maybe he was 18, whatever.

944
00:55:02,590 --> 00:55:06,700
He painstakingly
made a spot down

945
00:55:06,700 --> 00:55:09,760
in the basement
for himself, and he

946
00:55:09,760 --> 00:55:18,970
took every page of that book,
and he dried every page out.

947
00:55:18,970 --> 00:55:21,400
It took him-- I
don't know how long--

948
00:55:21,400 --> 00:55:24,000
weeks, and weeks, and weeks.

949
00:55:24,000 --> 00:55:29,300
And he put the
entire book together.

950
00:55:29,300 --> 00:55:31,810
I was so moved by that.

951
00:55:31,810 --> 00:55:37,990
But he felt it was important to
me, and it was important to him

952
00:55:37,990 --> 00:55:40,030
that I should have
this book intact.

953
00:55:40,030 --> 00:55:43,900

954
00:55:43,900 --> 00:55:46,990
And I have the book here.

955
00:55:46,990 --> 00:55:53,440
It's 85% in good shape and
only because he did the whole--

956
00:55:53,440 --> 00:55:56,960
my wife just put some
tape on it, but he took--

957
00:55:56,960 --> 00:55:58,730
And it was a brand-new book.

958
00:55:58,730 --> 00:56:01,560
I look at it once in a while.

959
00:56:01,560 --> 00:56:05,440
In the back I had-- there was
about 18 or 20 fellas that

960
00:56:05,440 --> 00:56:08,627
were killed in my outfit, so
I opened the book and once

961
00:56:08,627 --> 00:56:10,210
in a while-- and I
had it checked off,

962
00:56:10,210 --> 00:56:12,910
the guys in my outfit,
and I looked at it

963
00:56:12,910 --> 00:56:15,630
and remembered once in a while.

964
00:56:15,630 --> 00:56:21,990
But he took this page by page,
and he dried every page out.

965

00:56:21,990 --> 00:56:24,400

Did he ever comment
on the pictures?

966

00:56:24,400 --> 00:56:29,320

Then after that,
he said to me, Dad,

967

00:56:29,320 --> 00:56:34,210

I see these pictures from
the concentration camps.

968

00:56:34,210 --> 00:56:35,090

Were you there?

969

00:56:35,090 --> 00:56:37,990

Did you see this here?

970

00:56:37,990 --> 00:56:43,270

And then we had a talk,
and he was 18 or 20 years

971

00:56:43,270 --> 00:56:44,860

old at the time already.

972

00:56:44,860 --> 00:56:52,060

That was the first time in all
the years that anybody asked me

973

00:56:52,060 --> 00:56:54,940

where was I.

974

00:56:54,940 --> 00:56:58,060

Did either of you
express to the other

975

00:56:58,060 --> 00:57:02,460

why it took so long
for this to come out?

976

00:57:02,460 --> 00:57:04,120

No, I didn't.

977

00:57:04,120 --> 00:57:06,400

I didn't ask him.

978

00:57:06,400 --> 00:57:15,360

But he did-- the act of
putting that book together

979

00:57:15,360 --> 00:57:16,380

was enough for me.

980

00:57:16,380 --> 00:57:21,420

981

00:57:21,420 --> 00:57:23,985

Thank you very much
for telling your story

982

00:57:23,985 --> 00:57:26,450

and sharing it with us.

983

00:57:26,450 --> 00:57:30,000