Good afternoon. My name is Bernard Weinstein, and I direct the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project of the Holocaust Resource Center. We are affiliated with the Video Archives for Holocaust testimonies at the Sterling Library of Yale University.

We are privileged to welcome today Mr. Herb Carlson who was with the 63rd Infantry Division Detachment H-268 Military Government. He has generously volunteered to come here and tell us of his experiences during World War II and particularly with respect to the Holocaust. He lives in Milford, West Milford, New Jersey. Mr. Carlson, I'd like to welcome you.

Welcome indeed.

Thank you.

Thank you for inviting me.

Thank you. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about your background and what you did during the war and some of your experiences.

Well, of course, during combat, in the years I was with the 63rd Infantry, we came up through southern France-- Lyon, Dijon-Ville, Nancy, and so forth. Don't forget, we were, I think, thought of as a spearhead division, really. We fought as combat regiments, as I recall-- it's a long time ago-- and crossed the Rhine at Worms. Went through-- we were in the Colmar pocket in the Schwarzwald, the Black Forrest, and we're in--

This was around what year? 1944?

This would be '43, '44. And then of course war ended, of course, in '45. And we had gone to-- just up to Austria, and then were pulled back because I think, at the time, we were told that they wanted to let the Russians penetrate farther than we did in the infantry, of course.

At that point, since I have a fair knowledge of French and German, and they had indicated to us that those of us who had graduated with either law degrees or journalism degrees would be welcome into Military Government-- and I guess it was because of my knowledge of the languages, especially German-- I was transferred at that time in '45 to Military Government out of the 63rd Infantry into Detachment H-268 in Rothenburg ob der Tauber in Bayern, in Bavaria. And that was indeed an experience.

I'm not sure what, additionally, you would like me to tell you. If you have certain things that you'd like to ask of me at that point in Military Government, I'll be very happy to answer your questions. I was in Special Branch there. And in Special Branch we were supposed to have a program of denazification-- now there's a euphemism if ever I've heard it-- in which--

Whom did that involve?

Well, we-- I had a group in which we had what were known as "Fragebogen," a questionnaire-- a four-page questionnaire that were supposedly given to the people of the county. This was Kreis Rothenburg, the county which was Tauberbischofsheim, DinkelsbÃ¼hl, Rothenburg. A beautiful, beautiful they called the Romantische Strasse area of Bavaria. Romantic indeed. It was beautiful.

And many of the Germans from the north came down to this area because it was a sort of a garden spot-- not of America-- but the garden spot of Germany that had almost been pristine in having not been damaged as much as Dresden or the areas up north. But at the same time, many of the Nazis, who had fled from other areas, found a haven in our area. And it was supposedly our job to flush them out. And the men from the CIC with whom I worked very close--

CIC standing for?

Counterintelligence Corps. And interestingly enough, we had-- I remember I had an experience one time in which I worked with one of the men in our CIC outfit. I don't recall his name. It was so long ago. But he was a German-born American soldier who had lost his entire family in the concentration camps. And he hated them with a vengeance. It was a passion with him.

I remember we had to go to Nuremberg one day, which was, oh, perhaps from where we were, 90 kilometers. And we got into a jeep and went off looking for this man that we were supposed to pick up. And I drove this fellow-- I forgot his name. I think his first name was Sammy something. And we drove to Nuremberg. And that, of course, was-- Nuremberg were still beat up pretty badly, and we found the place where this guy was supposed to be living.

Excuse me, was the man you went with Jewish?

Yes.

So his family were German Jews?

He had lost his-- German Jews, yes. And we drove to this place where this character was supposed to be picked up. And I started to get out of the jeep with him because, after all, I was armed with a .45, and he was armed too. And he said, it's all right, you stay here. Stay here? I mean, don't you-- he said, I can handle this very nicely.

So he went upstairs to this building where our prisoner-to-be was living. And he was gone about 10, 15 minutes. And it shouldn't have taken that long. But when he came down, this creature that he brought was a mess. I mean, he was truly a mess. And I said, what happened? I said, surely he didn't give you any resistance? He said, no, he must have fallen somewhere. But he did a job on him and this was his what little measure of satisfaction he could get in his revenge, such as it was. It was the way he handled his prisoner collecting over the next year or so that I knew him.

And this was part of-- but to get back to the Fragebogen in Military Government. This was a four-page questionnaire. And we had categories of what were known as Dismissal from Government Work. These were for German people to fill out. And the Mandatory category was that if a man had belonged to the Nazi party prior to 1937, he was considered a mandatory, which meant that he could not be in any government post. I'm not talking about sensitive positions. I'm talking about anything. Even something as little as a postman he could not hold. Certainly not police not post-- anything.

Why was 1937 selected as a year of demarcation?

Well, because we considered that 1937 was a year in which the men joined the party voluntarily. This was considered that anyone who joined the Nazi Party prior to '37 or prior to it, did it out of what they called "freiwillig," free will. He selected. That was his choice to be a Nazi. After that it was something else again. But this was what we considered a mandatory category.

Right.

To get back to my experiences prior to Military Government, which I recall so well, when having been in southern Germany, our outfit-- if I recall, and I'm not sure that I remember correctly-- but I'm pretty sure we went into Dachau. And that was an experience beyond belief.

Tell us about it.

Well, while we were still in the States, we knew-- no, we didn't really know-- we had heard certain minor stories. But going into that place-- bodies. I'm not talking about those who were in the cribs that were still alive. I'm talking about the bodies that had been hastily thrown into ditches, into pits, that had been dug. These tremendous pits, and sprinkled with lime trying to decompose the bodies, I assume, before the American soldiers got there.

We found cars where they had hastily thrown bodies into boxcars. I'm not talking about the boxcars that had the sliding-- I'm talking about open cars. I assume that they were going to try to dispose of them in whatever way they could. And the memories start to come back, trying to recall the agony of those who were still alive who were able to navigate on their feet in their striped uniforms.

Was there anything that you had heard or read or anyone had ever told you that prepared you for this?

Absolutely nothing. Nothing. That was what distressed me tremendously because here we were, coming over to Germany in a war where these horrors were visited on so many millions of people, and we're never prepared to find anything like this. We were never indoctrinated as to our attitudes about these things, as to an understanding of what had happened. What had happened, why it had happened, who had done it, who had done it to whom. We were never told anything about it.

Why do you think not?

Why? Well, I can tell you quite honestly that my belief is that the anti-Semitism that existed in the American army-- and it was very substantial-- didn't give a damn. They really didn't care. They didn't care even to think about it.

There was no program of preparation. I mean, here I had come from-- we were stationed in Mississippi, which in itself was another thing. And you can imagine that in a state that did what it did to Blacks, and those Jews who had worked with the Blacks in the rights marches in Philadelphia, Mississippi and in Selma, Alabama, and other places.

So why should the army care? Why should they care? Don't forget that we were a segregated army in those days. Segregated black from white. Blacks and whites did not work together, didn't even fight together. I'm surprised that Jews and non-Jews were together in the army. And I can tell you from my personal experiences in the army, in the infantry in Mississippi, that it was not very pleasant. Not very pleasant.

To backtrack a little bit--

Sure.

What happened to you in Mississippi?

Well, I was, again as I said, the 63rd Infantry Division. And I think it was Centreville, Mississippi, was it? I guess. And I remember in our outfit, as I recall, there were only two or three Jewish guys. Now an infantry company consists of more than 200 men. So somewhere around 240-247 men. Something like that.

And I remember one guy by the name of Levi. Now Levi, if memory serves me, had the highest AGCT score in the whole division. An infantry division is approximately 15,000 men. Had an AGCT score of about 151, I believe. I have an AGCT score, I think, of 139, which made a mark-- made us the target.

I was strictly a dogface in the infantry. I had ROTC in college, but I never went for-- never went to OCS. That's another story. I was strictly a private in the infantry. And I was a Jew in the army, in the infantry, in Mississippi, and a northern Jew at that, which is the worst kind.

So this first sergeant that we had used to walk up and down in front of our-- I requote him well. He used to say, "I'm going to get you wise-guy college boys." He was from Texas. He said, "I'm going to have your ass's second wind before I'm through with you."

Well, it's a funny damn thing. But photography had always been my hobby. And of course I got my degree in journalism from the University of Alabama. It just happens that we had a colonel, a guy by the name of Paul, Colonel Paul Tombaugh, who was our regimental CO. I was in detachment-- not-- no-- that's Military Government. I was in the 255th Infantry Regiment of the 63rd Division, 3rd Battalion.

And the story, as I got it, was that one bright, beautiful, sunshiny day, Colonel Tombaugh went running into our battalion-- our regimental personnel headquarters. And he said, I want to look at the Form 20s-- Form 20s are the records of the enlisted men-- and, bring them into my office and so forth and let me-- I want to look them over.

Well, God was great and good to me that day. Because as he went through the Form 20, and he started to go through them, he came to my name, and he looked at this Form 20 of this youngster. Well, I was about 24 years old, I guess. And he saw that I had a bachelor's degree in journalism, major in journalism. And I had had--

From what school?

University of Alabama. And that I had experience in photograph-- much experience in photography since-- actually since 1926. I was seven years old at the time. So he's figured, well, this is a guy I ought to look at and talk to.

So he sat down and he called my battalion, which was the 3rd Battalion of the 255th Regiment. And I had a very decent battalion commander, a lieutenant colonel by the name of Louis Paul. Very decent man. Well, Tombaugh had been a West Pointer and also a very decent guy. And as Colonel Tombaugh spoke, Lieutenant Colonel Paul listened. And of course after all, the full chicken colonel who's in charge of the regiment is top dog in the regiment, obviously.

So he told Paul that he wanted to talk with me. So they found where I was and whatever training-- they had put me as an acting corporal gunner in an anti-tank platoon. We were working with 37 millimeter anti-tank weapons then. And I got the call that Colonel Tombaugh wanted to see me. So what the hell does he want me for? I'm just a buckass private in the infantry.

And I came up there, and came up to regiment, and gave the sergeant major a big highball-- not-- no, I didn't give him a highball, but told him that Colonel Tombaugh wanted me. So he pointed the thumb to me and that's where he is. So I went in and gave Tombaugh a fine highball and he said to me, I'm looking at your Form 20 here, soldier, and it looks interesting. I said, in what way, sir? Well, I see you have a degree in journalism. And I see you have many, many years of photography experience. And as you know, we are a new infantry division. And General Hibbs is very anxious to get some publicity for our division because we're going overseas soon and we're going to be in combat zone. We had a beautiful patch. We were called the "Blood and Fire" division. It had a flame, with a sword, blood, the whole bit. Oh, he said, what do you think about it? I said, well, I said, I think General Hibbs has a good idea. He wants publicity, I can get it for him. He said, you can? What are you going to do? How do you know you can? I said, Colonel, I know just what to do.

And while I'm talking the wheels are turning. I said, Colonel, look, we're a new division. We were actually activated-- the division was put together at the Casablanca Conference. This is where he put the whole thing together. I said, what I can do is this-- you put me on special duty. You don't even have to give me equipment. I'm equipped at home. I've got all kinds of camera stuff, and enlarging stuff, and the whole works because I know there's no TO job for a photographer and whatever here. TO is table of organization.

So he says, what are you going to do? I said, look, we're a new division, right? Right. We have men from all over the country, right? Right. I said, I will go out into the field every day. And I will visit, one part of the day, a guy from New England states. Later in the day, I'll take a man from the middle Atlantic states. Later in the day, I'll take a man from southern States. Another part of the day, I'll take a man from the middle of the country, then from the Rockies, then from the far West. I'll pick five, six men. I will do a story on them in training, in what they're doing while we're here in the States. In addition to that, I will do a series of pictures of them in their training activities. And prominently displayed in every part of this will be the blood and fire patch.

Well, the colonel almost went mad. He said, god, what an idea. I said, you know that we're going to send these articles to the hometown newspaper. Mom is going to love it. Pop is going to love it-- you know the newspaper is going to publish it-- his girlfriend, his wife, whatever. It's going to be great for his morale. And most of all, the publicity will be enormous for our division. He said, my god, he said, I think that's fantastic. Picked up the phone. Got General Hibbs on the phone. He said, general, I have a soldier here who has one hell of an idea to get-- I hear General Hibbs on the-- he said, send them on down.

Well, I got a vehicle. They gave me anything I wanted. Go on down to see General Hibbs at division headquarters. Went in to see General Hibbs, laid out the whole story for him. He loved it. From then on in, in all the time we were in training in the States, and all the time we went overseas-- and we fought as combat regiments overseas. We didn't fight as a division. We were sent over-- 253rd 254th. We had with us the Goums, the French-African troops. The 254th fought with some tank group of-- I forget what they were. But each one of our combat regiments fought separately until eventually we joined up together and then got the crap clobbered out of us. And so that's what happened-- special duty.

In the meantime, what had happened was this-- while we're still in the States-- to get back to the anti-Semitism in the army. We had what were known as a C group in our infantry. Companies, battalions, regiments, division-- these were all privates and-- privates and PFCs, really. That was it. Nothing higher. We were not as replacement fodder for other combat regiments and divisions. The 94th Division, part of our group. I think the 84th Division got some of our guys. And this is what-- we fought as individual soldiers attached to other divisions.

So every time that they sent out a group of these guys, we had a party in the day room. The day room, you know, was a thing attached to the back of the company headquarters where there was a piano perhaps, and guys could play chess and checkers or whatever. So we were having a party in there.

I was on my way home on a furlough. That's the tip off. You get a furlough, you know you're going to get it. While I'm on the train coming back from my furlough to see my wife and my daughter, there were some guys who say, hey, I hear the 63rd Division's going overseas. Oh, yeah? Well, get back to camp, and on the side of the day room is a list. And lo and behold Abou Ben Adhem's name with all the rest. So there I was, big and fat, and as whatever. There I am on the list in the C group, on my way. So we're having a party-- is this getting too?

No, please it's very, very--

So we're having a party in the day room. And Major Day came over to me, said hey, how are you doing? So me with a camera, a flash gun, the whole-- oh, all right. He said, you're taking lots of pictures for Blood and Fire? That was our division newspaper. I said, oh, no, that's over and done with. So these pictures are just for the guys. I said, we're all leaving. I said, we have a-- there's a C group on the-- he said, what do you mean? You're leaving? He said, that can't be. I said, come on let me show you, major. He was a very sweet guy.

So there I am. My name is on the list, shipping out. He said, that chicken shit Murphy. He was our company commander. And [? all ?] this I'm hit from the word go. He said, he's really out to get your ass isn't he? I said, well, hey, if I got to go, I got to go. I'm not looking for special favors.

Were you the only one on the list from your--

No. It was a whole group of us. So I forgot to tell you there was a little something in between-- a little contretemps-- in that I went into the-- when the list went up and my name was on it, prior to that I had sent home for my equipment because the colonel would give me permission to set up a room in the back. You see, in the infantry down there, they had these tremendous mess halls. In the back of the mess hall was the kitchen with a big walk-in refrigerator. And they gave me permission to send home for my enlarger and all my other equipment. And my father-in-law packed everything up and sent it on down to me with a camera and so forth.

And so I had gone-- had to go in now to the company commander, the first sergeant, and ask for permission to get my equipment packed up and sent home. Of course, now, we were supposed to be shipping out. And in shipping out, you're going through all kinds of training-- attack of the Nazi village, and you're going into the-- we call it-- we had this-- all kinds of training with live ammunition or whatever. And it was from morning to night. So I said, I'd like a little time to pack up my stuff and send it home. He said, well, TS. You brought it down here, you try to get it home the best way you can. So you know, I was stuck.

And I said to Major Day, well, major-- oh, he said are you taking lots of pictures? I said, no, it's finished. He said, what you mean it's finished? I said, I'm on the C group. He said, you're on the C group? You're not supposed to be on the C

group. I said, well, but I am. Come on out and take a look. There it is. So that's when he made his tasty remark about the company commander who was Captain Murphy, and Sergeant Smith, and so forth. So he said, leave it to me.

So he went over and spoke to Lieutenant Colonel Paul. Now obviously these guys don't know what's happening to one lousy little PFC. Well, in the meantime, he had gone to Colonel Tombaugh, and told Colonel Tombaugh what was going on with his boy, me. Tombaugh, they say, hit the roof when he heard this because at that point, I was important to his scheme of things because the politics in the army are just as bad as the politics in other organizations. So Colonel Tombaugh chewed out Colonel Paul. And Colonel Paul called up Captain Murphy and brought him into his office and the sergeant major told me he never in his life heard a captain get reamed the way Colonel Paul reamed him.

So that next afternoon, I get a call that I'm wanted by Captain Murphy. And Captain Murphy sent for me. And I came in to the orderly room. There's the first sergeant guarding the holy portals to the captain's office. And he just went like that, and I went in, gave Captain Murphy a highball. And there's Captain Murphy sitting there. He looked like he was fuming, but he was containing himself. And he said, you know-- he said, I've been thinking it over, and I'm going to stick my neck out. And I'm going to take your name off the C group list because you're doing a very good job for Blood and Fire, and the division, and so forth. And he didn't know that I had already heard through the grapevine what had transpired over a lousy little private like me.

And so I remained with the outfit. I didn't get any special privileges. They didn't feed me steak for lunch every day. But all it did was stop me from losing my equipment, took me off the C group. And as a result, I went overseas with our complete regiment. And that, of course, was great because the worst thing in the world that can happen to you is go out as a replacement with a fresh new outfit. It's an awful feeling. It's a terrible feeling when you go with an outfit that you're green. They don't know you. You don't know them. And you're just another rifle, that's all.

So I stayed with our outfit all the way through till the end of the war. And as I said, when the war ended in Europe, I then made the transfer to Military Government. And--

Did you experience any more anti-Semitism either from the ranks or from the top brass?

Oh, yes when going overseas. Never from the brass. The ranks. I never experienced any kind of anti-Semitism from the officers. Never that I could recall except this Captain Murphy who was my company commander. Of course, they wouldn't dare do anything to me because of the protection of Colonel Tombaugh.

However, going overseas was another story. Because when we went over, we went over on an Italian ship, and of course as privates we were in the bottom of the whole five-high in hammocks. And I could hear the remarks that were made about how I had gotten away with whatever they thought I got away with. You know, this Jew bastard-- your usual crap. But I was used to that. I mean, that was nothing new in those days. That was the nice-- those were the nice things that you heard because you grew up fighting your way home from school. This was-- I'm not-- I don't have a-- I'm not a professional about it. I just remember well all of the little things that happened growing up and staying alive.

You grew up though in the North? You were--

I grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey, yes. And actually in the South, Jews were usually in business. They had the little general stores and so forth. They didn't have a rough time of it, really. They did their share of anti-Black stuff, so they paid their dues in that way.

Yeah, I can remember when I lived in Tuscaloosa in the home of a family who had three sons. And they owned a general store in town. And one of their kids who, when he was about nine years old said to me-- he said to me, you know, I don't think I was seven years old before I found out the damn Yankee with two words.

If we can return to Dachau for a moment.

Yes, OK.

What were the reactions of some of the other men in your division to what they saw?

Interestingly enough, the lower class types-- that is, these tough monkeys from Kentucky and the hills of Tennessee, and Georgia, wherever-- they were the ones that were felt-- they were outraged. They were the ones who were outraged. The so-called better educated types-- how many of those that were-- they distanced themselves from the feelings about it. Whereas you see these hill guys, the tough guys, they were more visceral in their attitudes in their reacting to it. They would take an M-- not an M1. Was it an M3-- M2-- an automatic weapon and just shoot every kraut they could see without being selective. I mean, they didn't go into tears and all that sort of stuff. They just reacted in that way.

But I found very little sympathetic caring and understanding to what took place. There was no understanding of it. There was no-- we just-- we didn't realize. I think it was so horrible, we didn't realize what we were seeing until long afterwards.

Do you think-- and I'm asking you here to conjecture-- that if they had seen any other group here, I'm sure they knew that these were Jews that they saw, that they would have reacted differently? I don't even know if that question is answerable.

I don't know how I can-- I really don't know how I can answer it. Look, please try to remember that there was a rally in Madison Square Garden, the Nazi Bund, with that great American hero Charles Lindbergh up there with his American Firsters. Now, I come from a town where Fritz Kuhn used to hold Bund rallies. This area right here was the heart of the Nazi Bund. Right here-- Union.

In my town, Fritz Kuhn's girlfriend lived-- and three blocks away from where I live now, they used to hold Bund rallies. And I remember hearing a story when I first moved into the town 35 years ago. We had a mayor in those days with the name of Mario La Barbera-- a gentleman, Catholic, Italian.

And he told me a story about what had happened one night when they had a Bund rally back in the late '30s. And in fact, if I remember correctly, there was a woman on television who used to be a mistress of ceremonies for a very popular show, whose mother was the woman-- was this Nazi. What the hell was her name? I forget.

And one night, two carloads of Jewish kids from North Bergen, Hudson County, came from synagogue, and on the night of this Bund rally, they tore into town. Went to this place where the Bund meeting was being held, and literally took the place apart. There's a stream that still runs near us where they took the guys and threw them into the stream, tore the Nazi uniforms, tore the flags, whole bit. This was the great measure of what they did to the Nazis.

But I don't think there was ever a real understanding in this country, by anybody, of what had transpired and what was about to transpire. About Kristallnacht, for example, in Berlin. And they didn't understand this. It was beyond comprehension. I know damn well I didn't.

To your memory were these things-- were things like Kristallnacht covered in the American press?

I don't recall ever seeing anything about it. I don't recall ever seeing anything about it. We should have known what was happening, what was going to happen when the Bund Deutscher Madchen, the BDM, and the HJ, the Hitler Youth-- what they were preparing for, what was going on with their-- I remember they kept talking about the glider clubs that existed in Germany. Well, what the hell did they think this was? A sporting event? They were preparing and training these guys for aircraft manipulation.

As I said, I was in college from '37 to '41. Now we should have known prior to that. We should have been informed that the Nazi-- they had their-- what was it? What the hell's that sports event?

The Olympics?

The Olympics were held in '32?

'36. Jesse Owens.

Jesse Owens.

'36.

When Hitler wouldn't shake hands with him, wouldn't acknowledge, walked out, turned his back on him, and so forth. I mean, this was a minor thing, but-- but if you look at the newspapers of those days, you won't find any real information.

It's like when we had-- there was a newspaper called PM. Ingersoll had been the publisher. And it was back in the '30s. And Ingersoll was telling us about what the Japanese were doing with their cameras on the West Coast, and taking pictures. Nobody paid any attention.

Well, we didn't even get that kind of coverage on the Nazis because they don't want to alienate the nice German people in this country. I mean, after all, they're American citizens. Hell, we put the Japanese in camps. You didn't see anything about any Italians going into camps or Germans going into camps.

And look at the spying that went on in this country by Nazi groups and organizations.

Fifth columnists.

The fifth column, of course. We were flooded with that stuff along-- after all, who burned the Normandie, for example? That's a prime example. Nothing happened. Nothing transpired. Nobody said a word because if you start to think about-- the Germans started to come here in the mid 1800s. I think it was somewhere around 1850, 1860. Somewhere around then. And so many in this country have their roots. Doesn't mean that they were all Nazis, but they didn't want to offend. What the hell, they've got a couple of million Jews. You can offend them. To hell with them. They don't count.

So the-- in a way the indifference that was experienced--

Total indifference.

--was already, in a sense, foreseen by the callousness which--

To me the callousness was not-- I will tell you this quite honestly-- it was not only non-Jews who were callous and indifferent. Jews were totally indifferent. We were Americans, you know? We're Americans. So what? After all, it can't be true. Didn't want to believe that it was happening. Morgenthau said it was happening. Eleanor Roosevelt said it was happening. Something was happening. Nobody cared. Nobody cared. Well, you remember this story, of course. While six million or seven million burned, Franklin Delano Roosevelt-- he didn't want to offend. He didn't want to offend. The American firsters were having a ball here.

What did this experience of seeing what you saw in Dachau do to you personally?

Well, as far as I'm concerned, what it did was fortify my feelings prior to that. This didn't bring anything new to me other than the fact that what I suspected to be happening-- I never expected the depth of it. I never suspected the cruelty of it. I never suspected the obscenity of it. But I knew something had to be wrong. But it was self-- what it did to me, quite honestly, was toughen me to make sure that no way in the world was I going to allow it to happen again, personally. No way ever again.

I'm not a member of-- what's his name's group whose slogan is never again?

Meir Kahane.

Meir Kahane. He's no hero of mine. But at the same time, I say, in my way, never again. We must be vigilant. We must know. We must not only vigilant and know, but we must publish this information. We must not permit this information

to be hidden.

It's--

What else did you see after Dachau that--

After Dachau?

Four to five years--

Well, I'm trying to remember now because that was such an experience that-- was it Dachau? Oh, after the war, not during the war-- not while I was still in the infantry-- but it was my job, in addition to preparing these Fragebogen and getting these people to give me this information, I visited some of the other camps.

If I remember correctly, there was Theresienstadt which was the show place. There was Oranienburg, Buchenwald, as well as Auschwitz. I must have visited, I guess, about six others. But it was a repetition. When you've seen this kind of an obscenity, you become almost inured. You can't get sick over and over and over to see the same thing because you know that if it happens in Auschwitz, then it's also happening in Buchenwald. And it's also happening in Oranienburg. And it's also happening in how many others. Didn't happen in Theresienstadt because that was the show place-- to show the visiting firemen from wherever. That's how decent they are.

A Potemkin village--

That's right. Exactly. Sure. In fact, I went up to-- took some courses up at Bates College a couple of years ago. And Mrs. Carlson and I met with Gerda Haas. Gerda Haas, interestingly enough, came out of a town that I know quite well in Germany. She told us an interesting story.

She-- when they took the property away from them in the town-- I think it was Augsburg, I'm not sure-- they took their house away, and gave it to the local Nazi leader. And supposedly after the war, these people were supposed to be compensated for the properties that had been taken from them. She went back to Germany after the war, not too many years ago, and that son of a bitch is still living in that house, that family. Her house.

So anybody who thinks that there are any great changes taking place in Germany better think again. Better be ever vigilant. Be aware of what--

Have you yourself ever gone back?

No. No, I haven't. I think I will though. But I haven't. I haven't because, you know, I start to remember little incidents, little things that happened in a town like Rothenburg, for example, of which I have so many pictures. In fact, I have a few things in the trunk of my car you might be interested in looking at.

Yes.

The same Nazi gang who were running things during the war are still running things after the war. Make no mistake about it. The American army is not interested in cleansing the situation. They're interested in doing that 20 or 30 years and getting their fat pension. If I sound a little cynical, I am.

You don't think, for example, that the current trials that have gone on the last couple of years-- the Barbie trial, the Demjanjuk trial, and so on have had any kind of--

Hey--

--overall impact?

Come on. The worst anti-Semitism in the world is in France. The worst. So they didn't put people in concentration camps like the Germans did, but theirs is a different kind. It's like Black people have told me so many times. They feel-- well, why do they still live in the South and they feel more comfortable in that? Because they know how the feeling is. The honesty is there. They know that the people-- they know exactly where they're at.

France? Hey, you don't have to go far beyond Dreyfus to know they haven't changed that much.

Anybody who's seen the exhibit at the Jewish Museum knows that history-- begins to understand that history.

I remember my years in France, you know, my time in France very well in talking to these people.

Yeah.

All they were interested in from us was soap.

We only have a couple of minutes left and I would like you to make your concluding statement.

Concluding statement, well--

If you care to share what you come away with from your experiences.

I can only-- you know, I hate to repeat what I'm sure I have already said in 25 different ways. That no matter what we think, and what we hope-- of course, our only hope is in the younger generation. Our only hope is that they're educated and understand. When I hear people say that this never happened, or it wasn't so bad, or these kinds of things-- we have to be vigilant. The fact is that if we are not vigilant, if we don't watch to see what is happening and understand what has happened, it can happen again if we allow it to.

Herb, thank you very much.

Thanks for asking me.

It was a great pleasure.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity.