

Mr. Quinn, continue.

Now, I was just thinking, Doctor, about a couple of other incidents that happened pretty much in the same 24-hour period, and you're probably getting the impression that an awful lot happened very quickly. And that's my recollection of it, in a short period of time.

It's like any combat, any firefight. It's a lot of confusion. A lot of things are happening at once, and kind of hard to reconstruct it in a logical way. A couple of things that are pertinent, I think, not only to what happened but as to how I look upon it and what conclusions I come to-- I've mentioned Father [? Roth ?] and the fact that my brother somehow had mentioned it in a letter, and I thought it was some coincidence that he should be the second man that I met.

I pretty soon found out that there were a number of priests there, also, and not too many Jews in Dachau, as I recollect. Auschwitz was the place for Jews. There was some, a number of Italian Jews, which I thought remarkable. But I do know that, on the whole, if I were a Jew in Europe, I'd rather be an Italian Jew than a Jew in Germany because, apparently, they were able-- they had some help, and they had-- some pity was shown to them. So I kind of accepted that.

But weren't they also sent to Auschwitz in many cases and to other death camps?

Well, the people who have studied the records on that kind of a thing-- there's a new book out, too, about the situation of the Jews in Italy.

That's Susan Zuccotti's book, yeah.

Yeah, that must be it, that it was bad enough, bad enough but not as bad, perhaps, as it might have been.

But to get back to the priest, I was somewhat concerned about them, too, being a Catholic and having been on the way to the priesthood myself. There were several hundred of them there, mainly Polish, and I remember, a couple of days later, a solemn high mass of Thanksgiving being held right in the camp. I was present at that with a choir of priest [PERSONAL NAME]

Well, I have in my possession a letter dated the 2nd of May-- April 29, liberation day-- May the 2nd. While at Dachau, a day or two later, somewhere between the 2nd and the day we got there, a priest-- not a prisoner priest, but one came in from Munich. And he had a letter, which I have. It's a handwritten letter sent by the archbishop cardinal of Munich, Cardinal [? Pallava. ?]

And it said, written in German-- but I can remember the English of it, I think, pretty accurately. He said, the archbishop of Munich beseeches the American leadership at Dachau to free the priests and other religious ministers who are there soon so that we can put them in hospitals and sanatoria. [INAUDIBLE] at our own expense, signed Cardinal [? Pallava. ?] I'd heard about him, quite a man.

So what happened about that? Well, it was an odd thing, that when the instructions came down for the priorities of repatriating people at Dachau it was done by nationality, the French, the English. There were four Englishmen there, by the way, two Americans, business. French-- they would be liberated, but who's at the end of the list? Germans.

And I said, that's crazy. German inmates of that place were probably the first ones there and the earliest opponents of the regime. Don't we have any--

--responsibility?

--leeway? No leeway. You see, that's crazy, too. It's making a judgment on a very poor basis. It's a racist thing. The Germans will get out last. Why? Because they're Germans. Now, if it were because they were bad Germans, or Nazis, or guards, or torturers, sure. But just a German? That's as bad as hating somebody because he's a Greek.

And I was irritated at that. That's why the first short story that I wrote was called "Double Denial." It was one denial of the people who put others in there, denying their humanity, and there was some of our denials. We didn't respond well to it. Just as before we got into the war, Americans did not respond well to the need to give a haven for people who are going to die. And we knew-- well, other people knew that if went back they would pretty soon be taken care of.

That's a kind of a denial, also, of the rights of people. A refugee has a right. You got no place to go, and your door is open. You should let them in. So then I turn around and have to admit that, when I got to Munich and got the job of Religious Affairs Officer, one of the things Eisenhower's headquarters wanted done-- we had a handbook, everything to do-- was to get certain religious figures out of their pulpits, out of their churches.

If they were-- I can't say prominent Nazis. If they were early Nazis, holders of the Golden Party Badge, I believe, the first 100,000 members, they were considered-- they're bad. This involved a number of Lutheran clergymen and, I believe, at least two Catholic priests.

So I'm thinking right now, I have to go to the cardinal now. You probably know I'm a Catholic, but that doesn't matter. I'm an officer, and I have this job to carry out. But also, by my training, I know that a bishop just can't reach in and pull a pastor out. According to [INAUDIBLE], he's irremovable, except for cause. So I had quite a job.

I found the cardinal a lot easier to deal with than I thought because he said, you're giving me the cause? Would you give me the cause? Then I will take the act. Unfortunately, a Lutheran bishop did not have that much authority over his clergy as a Catholic bishop. A cardinal is a bishop anyway. But that was a pain in the neck.

Now let's see, having had a lot of combat, having been in the [INAUDIBLE], cut off about five or six days and almost frozen to death, having some rest, then being sent down and put onto this Dachau thing, hitting that, getting through that all right-- shaken up, but all right-- then I get that job in Munich, Religious Affairs Officer.

One of the things I had to do was to approve the publication of books [? that weren't ?] kind of crazy. The German textbooks had to be thrown out of the schools because they had pictures of soldiers in them. It was kind of silly. Our half of [INAUDIBLE] were also, but it left you with the job of starting a school with textbooks. That I couldn't see.

But I had to approve the publication of any book put out under religious auspices by a clergyman. And the first guy to come in with a manuscript to be approved was another German Dominican, Father [PERSONAL NAME]. He had been in a camp, too. I knew his reputation as a theologian.

He wanted this book to be published, and I thought, what is it, Father? And he explained carefully what it was. It was his analysis, as a theologian and a philosopher, of the inherent evil of that whole system. I said, all right, that's good. Let's publish that book.

That's when I got into trouble for permitting it or intending to permit it, and I was told by-- you talked about bigotry at one time?

Yes.

I was told by somebody who had influence over me that the only reason--

Somebody in the military?

Yes, American. --that the only reason that I was ready to OK that book was because I was just scared of priests because I was a Roman Catholic, and he was priest. I said, that's got nothing to do with it. I got rid of some Nazi-type priest.

So you see, even then and even now, we haven't weighed up the thing. If we had weighed up the thing adequately-- I'm talking about our culture in general-- would we have people denying? What did they deny? The whole thing, don't they? No Holocaust, a few Jews maybe, but six million? No. Camps? Torture? Ovens? Gas chambers? They're saying no, and

I'm saying yes.

I just wanted to add those two notes because they were significant about, I think, of how American army people were pretty gullible. They were ready to accept, really, half of what the Nazis were saying, but now it was called a kind of an Americanism that just looked down on Kikes, Yids, Spicks, [INAUDIBLE], Polacks, the whole thing, and we still have it.

Do you think things went back to being the way they were before the war, or do you think that, perhaps because of the Cold War and because of the fear of Russia, there was this desire to soft-pedal the German atrocities, the Nazi atrocities?

Yes, that could be the Soviet threat. I remember the McCarthy era when it really was a passion whipped up-- I'm talking about Senator Joe McCarthy's--

I remember people in this country being called prematurely antifascist because they were too soon in condemning Hitler.

Yeah, yeah yeah. And I'm also aware of what people will hear from me and maybe see this program. I'm also aware of things that maybe Jews wouldn't hear but people will say it in my hearing. The strong association at the time of McCarthy in the minds of a lot of Americans was between the communist threat and American Jews, that you were supposed to have a probability of nearly 80% to 90% that if somebody was a Jew, he was a communist, and if somebody was a communist, he was a Jew, the same thing about the idea during World War II that Jews did not make good combat soldiers.

Well, that's crazy. I know that from experience. So you had that kind of a feeling which would sometimes alleviate that if people hate communism more, they'll kind of let up on some other group that they like to feel superior to. Here we're touching on things that are a little mysterious to me. I really don't know. But as somebody who likes to take a philosophic attitude, is it reasonable, is it rational to think this way, to categorize all groups?

We say no, and yet I think we're all influenced by it to some extent. In some cases, I won't be, as a Christian and, particularly, as a Catholic bishop-- to hate Jews as Jews is a very serious and a moral fault and sin. Uh, any more sinful than to hate some other people? I'm about ready to say yes, maybe a little bit more because we owe so much to it.

But you see, I can say that in a Catholic group and get away with it. A Jewish person might say, don't patronize me or my creed, and then we'd argue for another three or four hours about it. But to me, that kind of attitude, a certain moral fault which bigotry is-- and Nazism was more than bigotry, you know. Bigotry is too mild a word. Those are evil. Those are moral evils.

How about our movies, our media, and the press? Are they doing a good job in exposing these even-handedly? No, not my opinion. They're not very even-handed. And that's, again, my gripe, though, Doctor. I got off on a tangent, sorry.

How long did you stay in the military after your tour of duty in Dachau?

Well, I got out for a while and went back. Oh, let's see. Well, I retired after reaching the rank of colonel about 10 years ago. I think about 10 ago, 11 years ago. And then I went back teaching English, philosophy.

Then I entered the church ministry again, did some studying, and was ordained a deacon. That's my religious rank, which is a level below the priest. It's in holy orders. I'm a clergyman in that sense but of a lower rank. So I have a church position, so you can call me a deacon, a colonel, or a teacher.

Overall, what was your feeling right after the war? Did you talk about what you saw at Dachau and elsewhere?

No.

Why not?

Because after I got out of Dachau, I know that I had nightmares every night while I was there and afterwards for at least six months and maybe more.

Do you remember those nightmares?

Some of them. Some I do. Some I do, little scraps, yeah. One scrap I remember-- and you never know when you're remembering it rightly, of course-- was that I, myself, was under attack, persecution, treatment of that kind.

You saw yourself in that position?

Hm?

You saw yourself in that position? Is that what you're saying?

When I had these bad dreams, nightmares you can call it, terrifying things, I would wake up. I remember one time waking up screaming, my pistol in my hand. I don't know what I was going to shoot at. The war was over. Everything was great, and I didn't sleep at all well.

I think you remember that I told you that, because I was an officer, I had a mission, I kind of had to keep myself in control and not go bonkers the way some of the men did. But you pay for that emotionally, I think, if you keep it in, keep it under a kind of repression. You're repressing the expression.

I guess the human psyche is such that it will come out. That's what I think happened to me, the worst dreams I ever had in my life. But from what some of those people told me in prison is almost matter-of-factly-- the way you hear the survivors now-- we're not feeling exactly what they felt, and it's bad enough to listen to them. But it must be terrible for them to go over it if they had to undergo it. If it was hard for me-- I don't know I'm particularly sensitive.

Did you begin to identify with the survivor?

I can identify with the survivor, yes. If they take off their hats to me, as they did just when I'd come up to talk to them as if I were a president or something-- I look at these people that suffered, and I respect them. I respect those people. If they've been able to come through that and remain human themselves, I respect them.

Yes, there is a bond. There's a bond that I feel with those people, not individually, but just anybody. I was in Auschwitz. We shake hands right away very warmly. Rabbi [? Frishman, ?] who I found out, as a young man, was in Dachau as a prisoner and later, after liberation, got out, became a rabbi, came to this country-- he's a rabbi in Freehold, New Jersey.

Three or four years ago, we became aware of one another. He invited me out to his temple and to his home in Freehold. I don't remember seeing him at Dachau. He doesn't remember seeing me as one of the Americans. But when we met, we embraced. You don't plan on that, you know. That is a good job for a psychiatrist, psychologist to work on, what is that bond. It's there, I think, not just with me.

I respect them. In a way, I honor them, that they remain, themselves, human. And I find very few who really hate, and when I say hate, I'm referring to a kind of a vicious fight, with nothing alleviating it, nothing ennobling it at all.

Nothing redemptive in it.

No, no, nothing redemptive in it. The very word Holocaust means what?

Burning.

Kind of a burnt offering, doesn't it? God is involved. Even for the people who suffer who don't believe, still, to me, he's

involved, and to the many of them, he was involved. And there is a picture that I still see of some kind of a round-up operation of the Gestapo somewhere in Europe. They've already shot some men, and there is one man in his prayer shawl. And his yarmulke on, and he's saying the prayers for the dead. The soldiers are looking on, and they're laughing at him.

[INAUDIBLE].

He's going to die pretty soon, too. That's what that picture said to me. They'll let him finish the prayer, and then he will get it. The miracle of this century is that those people, mainly Jews but not only Jews, would undergo what they had to undergo and still think, my God, I believe in you. Why have you permitted this to happen?

And they must have felt that way, and they did feel that way. They tell me that, and yet they keep their faith. They keep their love for humanity, which is the only real faith anyway, and that's why when I-- that's why there is a bond, I think, with most of the people that I meet. We're almost like brothers and sisters.

How long did you suppress your feelings?

Oh, I can almost tell you-- I can almost give you the date when my first short story published. It was based on my experiences there. That appeared in 1950. From '45 to '50. And I've written and published a number of short stories since then.

Were your stories the way out of that?

I think so. I think so. Pretty hard to tell for myself, anyway, where the idea for the short story will come from. Many writers really can't tell you, or they give you so many different versions that you can't make head or tail of them. This thing was there, I guess, and the first one-- and I really worked very hard on shaping it up as a short story, not as a documentary thing, but using events and characters. An author does that anyway. Yeah, I got part of it out of my system. Literature has kind of a purgative effect, curative effect, soothing effect.

Catharsis.

[INAUDIBLE] anyway.

Have you been writing steadily since?

I wish I could say steadily. I spent too much time teaching other people how to write. I have not written anything of that nature for a good 10 years. But in the meantime, I think I put out about 30 or 35 of them.

Any of them published?

Most of them published, yes. And one showed up in two anthologies, so I've inflicted myself on countless college students. They used to write me and say, what did you mean by that?

I kept at it pretty well. Maybe you can tell me why my stories having characters-- why the characters tend to be either Irish or Jewish? It's like asking William Butler Yeats why the countryside he talks about always seems to turn out to be that part of Ireland that he came from.

All writing is autobiography, right?

I guess that's about all you can say about it, yeah, unless you want to be a Greek and say the muse came down, inspired you, and put the idea into you.

Was there a direct connection between writing and speaking, as you're doing now, about it? Did one lead to the other?

Yes, I think so. When I came back-- I was still in the army. [INAUDIBLE] a couple more years, became a major. I never told anybody about this, never told them, never took the initiative to tell them. If somebody asked me, I'm sure I would've answered. And I never thought that I had to get it out.

I now feel that I guess I had to get it out, and I wrote a story about it and then later on, as I've lived longer and hope to accumulate a little wisdom, a little knowledge, looking back at this thing and saying, Holocaust is a very mild word. Pandemonium, meaning many demons-- it's more like that. And I know I've mentioned it before, but it's so critical an idea. I'm a witness.

You speak of--

And you can leave behind your testimony in words, in pictures. Do you have to do it if it's important? Yes, you have to do it if it's important. You have a choice, a moral choice? Not to me. I don't have any choice.

Somebody asked me to say [INAUDIBLE]-- will you give an address? Will you say this or say that? My answer, if at all possible, is always yes. It's got to be yes. But you know how we Irish are, always trying to liven things up a little bit with humor.

I will also go and recite the grievances of my Irish grandfathers at any time I'm asked, but there is no comparison, no comparison. But I understand Jews better, I think, as Jews, Jewishness, Judaism, a long memory, go back a long way. Even when they forget all about the past, they never quite lose it. Same with the Irish, a long memory, a racial memory.

Persecuted people? Yes, both of them have been persecuted, one group much more than the other, perhaps, in numbers. But listen, if one man that's brutalized is against another man being brutalized, they're both brutalized. We don't worry too much about numbers.

So this idea of the writing and speaking, which-- as you say, did it lead to that? I'm sure it did. I'm sure it did.

Do you remember the very first time you spoke publicly on this?

No, I don't think I can. I've have done quite a bit of speaking within Catholic circles. There are groups always looking for speakers. It's like veterans organization. I found myself speaking at this communion breakfast of a holy name society of that church and then winding up at a rotary luncheon, asked to speak. And sometimes I'll be asked to speak on some particular thing I know about. More and more now, when the subject is left up to me, I pick this one.

The Holocaust?

Yes, I do. I know that I'm faulted, somewhat, by people for that, as if I were-- what is the right word-- obsessed. I'm not obsessed. Obsessed means you can't reason about the thing. I can reason about it.

Do I feel compelled? I've talked about a moral compulsion, haven't I? The answer is yes. I've done nothing wrong with that, and it's not an obsession. Besides, people need to hear it every now and then.

In my teenagers at the school, I have been teaching philosophy. I get to the area of ethics. It's just a brief touch upon major themes. That's about the first time that this thing will come up, this Holocaust question will come up, and I'll have a class. They're a dozen very bright kids, some Jews, some non-Jews.

I do detect a little impatience in the young. I wonder if that is beginning or what. There's some impatience in hearing about this. Are they defensive? I don't know. But I've noticed it. They seem not to want to know too much about it.

You certainly don't want to discuss it, which I can understand, but not to know anything about it-- is this new generation coming up, even of young Jewish people? The sufferers, I guess, others like Poles, and Hungarians, and Gypsies, and the rest of it, yes. But Jews are so darn visible here, so the whole campaign was against them racially.

And it's not up to me to tell the Jew how to be a Jew, but I could say to somebody, look, Jews should know about this. Listen. Learn a little bit.

What form this is defensiveness take, this resistance?

Well, I put it down as boredom.

I've heard this before.

Yeah, I think I detect some of that. They haven't heard my part before, but they heard all about the problem before. Have they tried [INAUDIBLE] with it, you mean? Could that be? I really don't think so. I really don't think so.

Maybe it's part of a general-- where the youth of that age are right now, 1989, as I see them. We know all the temptations that they have, the drugs being only one of them, pulling them in every different direction. Maybe we've got them all so upset they don't want to hear about any more problems. I don't know about that. That's a guess right out of the blue.

Yeah. It's almost like they see so much around them that they think is violence and inhumanity that this is just one more thing that--

Yes, that could be. That could be. But apparently, to the young, judging by what they will find to buy as tapes to look at or movies to go to, so much more violence and sexuality of a kind of an outrageous kind as against 20 years ago, very discernible increase in tension. And they are still young. They are still adolescents.

You can get an A plus in high school physics. Where are you emotionally in your ability to handle these things? We push the kids a lot, and maybe they feel, now they want to push something else on me. They want me to learn more about something that happened even before my own father was born. That's the way they're reacting.

How about parents? Do parents complain to you?

No, no, no parent has ever complained to me, at least about this thing, which I won't drag in by the hills. If you're talking about ethics, we talked about natural law. If you're talking about common law, if you're talking about what does, through history as we know it-- what has guided the people as to right things and wrong things on law and religion coming into it, can we ignore this latest, maybe biggest? No, you can't ignore it.

But I noticed that a couple of times I've mentioned it I have a negative reaction, or at least boredom and sometimes kids sending you a signal, I don't want to hear about it. I suppose what I should do would be occasionally to get a hold of them and say, is this what you are thinking? Well, come out with it. Tell me. You don't want to hear about it? Tell me why you don't want to hear about. I haven't done that yet. I might do it.

I've done it to adults, though, because I have been challenged there. I have had people tell me that I must have been dreaming half of the things that I told them about because they'll refer to such and such a book by such and such a person that says, no, there's no historical validity to it.

And I said, well, so it's in the book, and just because you read it there, that is the gospel truth then? Well, he wouldn't write it if it weren't true. Oh, he wouldn't write it if it weren't true? Like Mein Kampf and The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Oh Lord. A lot of things are written that are not true. I hope I haven't done them. If I've done them, it hadn't been deliberately. I don't lie.

We're fortunate that we have you doing it.

Well, there's one notion that some people have that I really have to dispel. A reporter writing about this in the [INAUDIBLE] press one time referred to me not as a liberator but as a hero.

I reject that. I am not a hero. What I did was in no way heroic any more than any other soldier. I did a job, risked my life, yes, but I need not be exalted by such a title. Now, a survivor will look upon me as a savior, perhaps, or a rescuer. Rabbi [? Frishman ?] threw his arms around me and called me a hero. That's putting things a little bit out of perspective, proportion.

I'll tell you who the heroes are in my view, as against the people who underwent things with patience and without hate, which is heroic. The heroes are the people, like the civilian French, or Polish, or even German who hid people, the people who hid the Frank family, that reserve that name, that word, hero, heroine, for those people because they didn't have to do it.

What did they risk? Everything. So I didn't want the conversation to stop without me getting rid of the hero label and just say soldier.

That in itself is a very honorable title.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

You're quite welcome. Thank you for having me.

My pleasure.