

NAME: HAIM BLANC
INTERVIEWER: LILLY SINGER
CAMP: DACHAU
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Q: I'm Lilly Singer. We are in Jerusalem. I am interviewing Dr. and Professor Haim Blanc at 12 Hovevei Zion, in Jerusalem. Telephone number 632340. Dr. Blanc was born in Cernowitz which was at that time in Romania. At the present time it is in Russia. He was born on July 25, 1926. He left Cernowitz in 1930, went to Paris, spent the following nine years in Paris, and in 1939 moved to the U.S.A. At the time of liberation Dr. Blanc was 19 years old. He had finished Harvard and had a B.A. in Linguistics and he was hoping to make that his life's career, as he indeed did. He is presently occupied in Linguistics in which he has his doctorate and he teaches. The military unit that Dr. Blanc was attached to was MOS, which is Military Occupation Specialty.

A: No. MOS are initials that came to mind when you mentioned it. It was a specialty but not my unit. The unit that I was in at that time was the 9th Division, 9th Infantry Division. If you want more it's the 774th Tank Battalion.

Q: And the rank at the time of liberation was second lieutenant. Dr. Blanc did not go into any of the concentration camps as a soldier and under anybody's orders. He did go into Dachau after liberation, and his contact with the survivors was not in Dachau but shortly afterwards. How did you first hear about concentration camps anyway? How did you first hear about the fact that there was such a thing as a concentration camp?

A: I have the sensation of always having heard of it. It was part of my growing up at the time. Somewhere in the 1940's when they began coming out and, before

that, in the 1930's, the whole Hitler regime was part of our growing up. The rumors that came out about the first persecution of Jews in Germany, even before the concentration camps, was all part of our daily life.

Q: So you did know.

A: Yes. I couldn't point out when I really got details about it because some specific stories, some rumors were mixed up with the real thing. I just grew up with those things.

Q: So when Dachau was liberated and you went to visit on your own, what did you expect to find there? What were your expectations?

A: First of all, I expected to see something entirely cleaned up. I didn't expect to see any gory remains. Then I expected to see something that would give you an idea of what had been going on in these camps. In other words, barracks-- rows and rows of places where people were kept.

Q: What was the date of your arrival in Dachau? I mean the approximate date, month.

A: It must have been around the summer of 1945. June, July, or August.

Q: Was it in fact completely cleaned up already when you got there?

A: Yes, that's my recollection of it now. I may not have a very good memory, but that's my recollection.

Q: Did you come across anybody who had been there at the time before it was cleaned up?

A: No.

Q: So you already had some information from the newspapers and from other people, and you found exactly what you expected. A cleaned-up camp.

A: More or less. Right.

Q: How did it affect you going into the camp only a few months after it was

cleaned up?

A: It's hard to remember that. It's hard to keep it apart from the general impression of the Holocaust period, some kind of general blurred horror, which was then still very fresh, very much alive and to keep that apart from the day-to-day experience of walking through a place and looking around and seeing where the guardposts must have been, where the people must have been kept. It was hard to keep up a general diffused kind of impression, not very specific and not thinking specifically about specific people. There were no specific people there that I could relate to at the moment.

Q: You were stationed in Germany. Where? Near Munich someplace?

A: Near Munich at a place called Batiblenk. It had been an air field. It's a town and next to it had been a big air base. We had constructed a prisoner of war camp on it. It was called PWE 26 -- Prisoner of War Enclosure 26 -- and it was being used by the American Army to keep German prisoners of war until they got liberated, discharged, etc.

Q: What were your feelings toward those German soldiers before, after, and during the time when you knew about what they were involved in? What were your own feelings and emotions?

A: Ah, that's it. I did not know. I'm telling you there was this diffused impression of what had been going on in Germany. That I knew. But my impressions about particular prisoners which I came in contact with quite a bit were that they were mostly, I'm afraid to say, individuals. I have a kind of personality trait or whatever you want to call it, a character trait, which can come in handy, which can be an advantage, it can be a disadvantage. That's the inability to generalize. In work I often must make generalizations and I can't do it. And here, you have a bunch of people walking around a camp. I can say about individuals whatever I

find out about individuals, but to generalize them [is hard]. I felt in some diffused way these were all members of the German Army, former German Army, and as such they must have been involved in one way or another both in the war and in various military activities and these things that had to do with specific murderous activities against Jews.

Q Did you have SS men there?

A: That's what I was going to say. Now occasionally, there were some who came in specifically as SS and they were so identified. Because I knew German, part of my job there in PWE 26 was to censor or investigate their possessions. A bunch of SS people came in identified as such, and they carried with them indeed a whole terrific amount of anti-Semitic SS literature. I'd take it away from them, and not just the straight anti-Semitic, but the regular literature that they used to carry with them. I remember one or two cases when they would argue with me. They'd say, "No. There is nothing wrong with this. This is just a military this or that," and I'd say, "Never mind about that. Throw it out." I mean I wouldn't argue in that sense. But that was specific contact with some SS soldiers that we knew were going to be accorded some kind of special treatment, [unintelligible] put apart.

Q: So you were warned to treat them with more care or more strictness?

A: Oh, no.

Q: You were not?

A: Nobody told me. The idea is you go and check. That's part of your job. Now for normal prisoners, you didn't expect to find any kind of special literature. Here you expected it. But I did this on my own. I don't recall anybody giving me any directions on it. With these guys, I have to watch a little more closely because they are bound to have this stuff. The SS people had come in recently, but a

prisoner that had been there for a while, who had been assigned to assist me in some of my work, occasionally pointed out a German prisoner. He saw me picking out things and once or twice he pointed out to me things that I missed. Mainly because I didn't know this literature so well. I passed on a dictionary. An encyclopedic dictionary. I said O.K., let them keep the dictionary. Who wants to mess with that? He said, "No. Look at that. They're not simply dictionaries." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Look," and he showed me what any idiot should have known if I had had a little more experience. He said any dictionary of this sort is bound to be full of German Nazi propaganda because that's part of the thing. For instance, he made me look at the dictionary item that gave a description of World War II. He said, "Go ahead, look at World War II and see what it says." So I looked and I couldn't find it and he smiled and said, "Where are you looking? Are you looking under World or War? No, you look under *Gross* because *Gross Deutschland frei [unintelligible]*. Great is Germany's fight for freedom. That's where you find about the war." I said no, but [unintelligible] he was right. So we removed the dictionary.

Q: Did you ever have in the prisoner of war camp, for instance, prisoners who were actually guards or people from Dachau who were actively involved in running the camp?

A: No. Dachau was a visit.

Q: That was not close enough.

A: It was a visit on my own. The prisoners I had under my guard, under my care....

Q:had nothing to do with it.

A: Who knows? Who knows? I didn't go through their individual records.

Q: Did you have any personal hatred or animosity to any specific people among the prisoners whom you knew were more involved than others?

A: I didn't know. I would have had to look very hard to discover that this particular person had been involved. Like I told you, there was a bunch of SS prisoners there, but I had nothing to do with them except searching their possessions. And the people I did have to do with, like this man I just mentioned and a few other people, were not of the kind of personnel who would have been involved. They were not SS people and they would not have been involved in the camp.

Q: So to your knowledge, you never came face-to-face with anybody who had an active part in killing innocent people?

A: I wouldn't say that.

Q: But, to your knowledge...

A: No, even to my knowledge, if killing innocent people is what I understand it to mean. There were people who took part in the war and they killed people as part of their military duties; but if you mean killing Jews, that I didn't come across.

Q: Right. How long were you stationed there?

A: I was stationed there the summer of 1945 to something like the end of 1945 or the beginning of 1946. Something like that.

Q: Some months.

A: Yes, a few months, and then I was transferred to Austria....

[Interruption in tape. Conversation resumes as follows.]

A: There were all kinds of interesting things, but no direct meeting with anybody who had anything to do... as far as I know. That means they weren't going to tell me and I wasn't going to look into their records.

Q: So your trip to Dachau was something you decided to go by yourself?

A: Yes, because it was near enough and because it was one of the things one should

see. We weren't anywhere near the Polish areas and those concentration camps. There was some possibility of going to them, but I wasn't going to make a research job on the sites of the concentration camps where they were.

Q: So you remember that visit as just part of the overall shock of finding out of what had happened.

A: It wasn't right. Yes.

Q: Do you remember any after effects after you left there? Did it haunt you? Did it bother you? Did you talk about it?

A: No, no, because as I told you, what haunts you and what stays with you and what [unintelligible] for a long time is the general knowledge of what had been going on, not a particular place.

Q: Right. Now, when did you come in touch with the survivors?

A: Again, I don't remember exactly the first time, but there were two periods having to do with the two places I've been. First, this place near Munich in Batiblenk, and then the second place in Austria where survivors were somehow around as they were being transferred or after they had been transferred to these famous DP camps. As I now recall, near Munich, somewhere like that, people had arrived and were being classified, arranged, and taken care of by, I think, the Red Cross people. But, somehow it had to do with our unit being there. This prisoner of war camp was administered by the 774th Tank Division, which was part of the 9th Division. The war was actually over and we had to administer things, so I was put in charge of one of the administrations and then I somehow got wind of this thing that there were these DPs around and they are being taken care of and given food and things like that. Then I either simply said to myself I've got to go see some of these people or somehow it just turned out. I forget. People in our unit always called on me whenever there was some talking to do

in German or that kind of thing. They knew that I could talk and I, myself, let it be known that I could. We didn't have in our unit hardly any other Jews, but we had...yes, I'm remembering things from way back.

Q: Why that's lovely. I can see that you are smiling.

A: There was one fellow there called Sakowitz, who was a Jew. He never mentioned it, but that name is purely a Jewish name, isn't it? Sakowitz. He was the mortar officer, and the reason I remember him is because he got me my driving license. He got me a Jeep and he got me a driving license. Through fellows like him the word got around that these Jews were around, and so somehow I got there and talked to them. I forget exactly how and how long. But you're looking for an emotional reaction or recollection? That I recall. These people had been, by that time, out for some time and had been making their way out of Poland. In this case, they left through Germany and, in other cases, Austria or Italy. In fact, eventually they got here and here were these people making their way into these DP camps, and here I could converse with them. They began by talking German, but then we switched to Yiddish and either they thought I might be Jewish or they didn't -- I don't know -- but at times we started talking Yiddish and leaving out the German, so that made it more...what can I say?

Q: Intimate.

A: Yes. A feeling that you were talking somehow...I mean, in the beginning you were an American. You wore a uniform, and these people are refugees or whatever, but that somehow crumbled down. It wasn't immediate, but I get the feeling that on their part it also crumbled down fairly quickly.

Q: So you came to the human level very quickly.

A: Yes.

Q: How did they look? Were they fed and dressed?

A: Not dressed and not...[unintelligible] fed. I think they were no longer what they might have been at one time -- emaciated and skeleton-like and stuff like that. In fact, as you may know, some of the people tended to grow overweight, obese. I remember a couple of them like that, who looked like that, and who even said so. I said to them, "It doesn't look like you are starving." It was this banter, kidding around. And they said, "Well, you should have seen us a few months earlier; that all comes from overeating because of the conditions in the camp."

Q: How much did you identify with them as your people? How much of an affinity, how much of a relationship were you able to develop with these people? Was it "them" or was it....?

A: You'd have to ask them what they felt about it. What I felt about it was that it was us! It was not them. It was me. I belong there. In fact, a little diffused guilt because how come you weren't there. How come you got away. I mean me, talking to myself. I don't think anybody said that to me, but just me talking to myself. And that very strong feeling that it was "us." It was me. And I, just by some fluke, had gotten separated from them at some point. I tell myself rationally that it's not a fluke at all. That's how my parents worked it. If it hadn't been for their getting out of various places in time, I would have been them.

Q: So there was that feeling of affinity, the feeling of kinship, the feeling of "this is my people," and the feeling of "I'm lucky it wasn't me."

A: That comes later. The first thing is "I'm guilty it wasn't me." This feeling happened in several places, not only places, but on several stages in my own personal history. One is here, but the one that was even more [unintelligible], even moreso, and even more involved with the guilt feelings is in Paris. The people from the DP camps were not my schoolmates because I had left by the

time they got taken away. I had escaped already. But my schoolmates were in Paris, and when I met some of them¹ I had this feeling again that I should have been there. And, of course, that was a stronger feeling than the DP camp because it was a stronger affinity, a stronger identification. That's really them. The others are my kinsmen and my people, and so forth, but they are like one removed. And by the way, it has to do with the language, too. French is really the language I grew up with, and I talked with these people in the same language we talked in school. Yiddish is for me a background language. It's my parents' language and I don't know it as well as I know French. I'm not as fluent in it. In fact, one of the few occasions where I actually had to use Yiddish after many years was with these survivors, because there that was the normal thing to do, and it did not come so easily or smoothly to me as the French did. So, going back to the time when I was in Paris...before we got to Germany, we went through France and through Paris. So it's probably not related to what you're interested in, but because...some of my erstwhile schoolmates should be considered survivors also to a certain extent. Most of them weren't in camps, but they were under German occupation and stuff like that so that was life for them.

Q: Did you ever share any of these feelings of guilt and discomfort you had about the DP people in Germany and Austria and your friends in Paris with anybody or was it just something you kept to yourself? Was that something you just lived with or did you share it with anyone?

A: I mostly lived with it and shared it only when it was called out very specifically. I mean in discussions. For instance, there were one or two people, indeed, of the French schoolmates who would bring up the subject. In one case, a young fellow

¹Dr. Blanc's unit actually went through France and Paris before going to Germany where he visited Dachau.

actually said, "So, where were you?" He actually made a little dig although not very violent. In most cases, there were no digs at all, but, in fact, these people would say, "Weren't you lucky?" And those were occasions where if I had had the gumption, I could have mentioned how I felt, but I didn't. I guess I tried to avoid it.

Q: Have you ever discussed this with your wife?

A: Yes, of course. And, in general, the family, kids, and our close friends. But now, look how late...it comes up very often. I'll tell you one thing, by the way, that I wanted to mention to you. Maybe you don't need to have it mentioned, but there is a fellow here who does research in this called Yehuda Bauer. He has been speaking and writing and discussing subjects for some years now and is doing a magnificent job. And his work is in part the thing that brings it up. He has now completed a series of talks on the radio, which I religiously, not only listen to, but record.

Q: What specifically is his work about?

A: The history of the Holocaust and the history of the Jews in those days. If you haven't seen it, it's a must, which I not recommend, but insist that you see. One book is called *Escape and Rescue*, I think. It is essentially about the organization which is called the B'richa, which helped these people that I am now talking about -- the survivors of the DP camps -- to escape out of the DP camps towards [unintelligible] mostly towards Palestine. That is why it's called the B'richa. That organization and that whole part is only one of the things that Yehuda Bauer has written about and talked about and he's doing a magnificent job. And as I said, the series on the radio was a talk not about the B'richa especially, but it was called Jewish reactions in the Holocaust period from surrender to resistance, something like that. That's how it's translated roughly,

but the book is not the only thing that's made him known.

Q: And is that in English?

A: That's it. I'm telling you.

Q: So that's Yehuda Bauer. *Escape and Rescue* or *Flight and Rescue*. That's the book.

A: That book is not only a book you must read because of its sense of value, but what concerns us here is that it's a book through which I discovered some of the people that I had met. Now this is in Innsbruck, Austria, when I was stationed in Austria. Innsbruck is in a valley, correct? It is on the river, but surrounded by mountains, etc. But the point is, it's one of the crossroads; I mean it's one of the chief points on the roads taking people out of Germany and Eastern Europe and Austria and into Italy and other places to go to the Mediterranean and, eventually, to Palestine. And when I was stationed there, I met both with the people who were coming across and with the people who were organizing their escape, who were Palestinian members of the British Army, who had left, and in some cases simply deserted, the British Army they were stationed with and were organizing this escape. So this book came out and I heard a review of it on the radio, and it mentioned the Innsbruck period and that the Innsbruck thing played an important part in it. It even mentioned the fellow who was in charge of the unit, who was [unintelligible], and I hadn't seen him since then. So I called up this Yehuda Bauer and said, "Bauer, Where is this man? Can you tell me where he is? He said yes. He gave me an address -- he had moved somewhere in the north -- and I wrote him a postcard. Boom. A day later, he showed up together with his wife. He was one of the fellows who organized this little escape business. My Innsbruck period was the end of 1945, the beginning of 1946. And I met them and I got linked up with them, and they saw that I could help in

some ways, possibly. I was in a position. At that time, when I was assigned to Innsbruck, I was a liaison officer to the French Army, to the French Headquarters in Austria. I was to be an American who could speak French, and I was assigned to be the representative of the U.S. Forces in Austria. This was the French Forces in Austria, and there I was. And when I was there, I had an office of my own. I had a telephone and a rubber stamp and all kinds of things, which I could use and did use occasionally to facilitate their escape. They got a hold of me and got wind that I was there and I was a possible help so I did that.

Q: That's marvelous. When you were talking to some of the survivors, did they tell you of their experiences in the concentration camps and during the war? Did they confide in you? Did they tell you their life stories or what they went through or were they just talking about the future?

A: The present.

Q: And were they talking about the past at all?

A: Hardly anything and I didn't see any point in asking about the past. I think it was sort of taken for granted between us that "we know."

Q: Did your attitude to the German civilians or German prisoners or German soldiers change at all after you had been in contact with the survivors? I know that you said you don't generalize and you didn't hate them as a nation, but did your attitude change at all from before meeting the survivors, before going to Dachau, to after being there for quite a while?

A: I remember at some point talking to some Germans or Austrians -- later when we were in Austria -- and having a feeling that "I don't like the way this guy is talking." I don't think there was any difference before and after I met them. I don't remember, let's put it that way. If he is behaving as a decent human being, then he's behaving as a decent human being. If he's behaving as a non-decent

human being, if he reminds me of the kind of things that I find objectionable in people, arrogant or whatever, then by God, he's arrogant. And if I have to kick him in the pants, then I kick him. Of course this specifically never happened.

Q: Did you meet anybody in the Army, among your friends, who had very severe reactions to what they found in concentration camps among the survivors or heard the stories for the first time or was this not a subject that was discussed among the soldiers and among the officers?

A: I don't remember discussing these things, but the subject came up every once in a while. And I remember the subject mainly was what the Germans had done to the Jews during the war. The subject would come up some time or the other, and I can remember getting slightly involved in discussions because some people were saying that you really couldn't believe that, that it was very exaggerated and "Come on. Come off it."

Q: That it's not possible.

A: So I remember occasional things like that from some fellows, but not people who I respected very much; therefore, not people I had much of a discussion with. So I would react to that.

Q: What was your reaction?

A: I reacted not with the intent of having an argument because an argument you can't have on that level with people who are completely indifferent and misinformed to start with. They should know that it doesn't go by so easily. In fact, I remember a kind of thing where I really got into hot water. They were beginning the argument with how much more civilized the Germans are than the French, that the French are just dirty, unkempt, uncouth, you can't believe them. Germans are much more civilized, organized, and orderly. They are cleaner. That kind of stuff would go on. I don't know if you have heard such stories.

Q: Oh, yes. Did that make you angry?

A: Yes Doubly. Not only was it that they were putting up the Germans, but putting down the French, which I consider myself more. And then from there, I would react to that by telling people they should look at the Germans a little closer. Don't make such generalizations. There are things that aren't well known. They should read; I even would tell them what to read although there are people who are not necessarily readers. In fact, I can't remember that anyone took up my suggestion to read this or that book. But, never mind, the point is I was reacting in this way telling them not to go along with this kind of sloppy thinking, thinking they know what the world is all about, but not knowing some fundamental things about the world. I remember getting really fundamental and philosophic and this is where I got into hot water. I said, "Some of these things, these evil things, that the Germans did are the kind of thing that you can find in any nation if they let themselves go and they let themselves be guided by certain evil forces that there are. I wouldn't even be surprised if you can find a bunch of American GIs who could do what the SS had done exactly, provided they were trained for it." I felt strong enough with it to say it like that and it ended up I'm saying...by saying it, "You guys know damn well that some of the things that GIs did were not the greatest and the most moral and the most kindly kinds of things while this occupation." Sometimes I said to them, "I'm ashamed of the uniform I wear." So, I don't know if you can guess the kind of reaction that they gave, but they were people that I felt friendly enough with so I knew they...but they reacted with anger, of course, and completely to my luck...and that's the reason I remember it because those are the things that not only are lucky, but they choose the things you yourself might need to know. I was a second lieutenant and our senior officer was probably nothing more than a first

lieutenant or maybe a captain. I still remember his name. Finley. And when I said that, there was silence. Oppressive silence. He said, "By God, so do I." I said that sometimes I was ashamed of the uniform I wear and he said, "By God, so do I." I don't know to this day whether he said it only to get me off the hook, or because he really felt that way, or because he felt that there was something in what I said that he would agree, but the fact that he said that probably saved a couple of bones and teeth out of my head. But, on top of that, I do really believe that this is the kind of thing that we sometimes neglect -- that people are idiotic and stupid and stuff like that, but somewhere near them, if only given the opportunity, will come up a guy who will say the right thing at the right time.

Q: It's obvious then that you feel that the teaching of the Holocaust and the teaching of what happened is one way of preventing it from happening any place else because I assume that you still feel the same way, that given the "right" set of circumstances and the "right" kind of leadership -- I'm saying "right" in quotation marks -- that any nation could evolve into a situation of such mass destruction and mass hatred and mass extermination.

A: Killing is the word. That's another thing that I learned from Yehuda Bauer. He never used the word "extermination." "Extermination" is an insult. With people, it's "killing." And that's what it was.

Q: I don't like the word Holocaust either, but it's been used a great deal.

A: Right.

Q: Do you feel that it should be taught in school, here as well as in the United States? We're here in Israel and I don't know how much is being taught here and I'd like to know how you feel about it.

Q: Yes, I have very strong feeling about that, but not simply that it should be taught. We the people who are here -- the survivors, the adults, teachers -- have

to learn ourselves. Learn, study the history of this thing, but as a subject for study. Not a subject for waving around moral principles. That is for the birds. By for the birds, I mean morality. I mean, to tell people that such things are evil... really! That's not the point. The point is to say what the things are, what actually happened, and not to say that what happened is just the broad, diffused result of a lot of people being killed. Because the fact that a lot of Jews were killed, that it was just us, is a fundamental thing that we start with. We assume. If some people don't know it, indeed that fundamental thing should be taught. [The point is to say] the other things that go with it, mainly what exactly happened, how it was built up by the Nazis, and not make it a simplistic matter. The Nazi's came to power and Hitler....

[End of Side One. Side Two begins as follows]

- A: A lot of it has to do with history. I won't bother you with the details, but I myself have not only studied part of history that I have a particular interest in, but I have an interest in it.
- Q: So you are a historian, too.
- A: I have a historical interest, shall we say. That's why Yehuda Bauer's book is so great because one of the things it shows you is that you've got to study. You can't make generalizations. People have made these broad generalizations of one kind or another which just don't hold up when you study. What holds up when you study? All the different details. The differences, for instance, between what happened in which country. They talk only about the concentration camps in this century -- Polish and East European Jewry. O.K. Even that had its differences and not every Polish town went through the same automatic

circumstances. And the whole business about generalizing what is called the *Judenraten*, that they were all of one kind. They were not. There were all kinds of people. This you've got to know. You can't make it up. And to know this, you've got to study.

Q: How did you get this across to your children?

A: You'll have to ask them, I don't know. We tried.

Q: Well, how did you try? What was your way of teaching them from what you saw?

A: Just talking about it when the the subjects come up, which they do every once in a while. We just talk about it and they ask questions. I tell them what I know and don't know. We have kids ranging from 19 to 25, and they are very different people. I hope that they have already absorbed and will yet absorb, but by that age they must have already absorbed and will read. This remains to be seen. The proof of the pudding will be in their lives.

Q: How do you feel about the American attempt at publicizing and explaining and presenting this period in a movie like the *Holocaust* movie? Do you feel that this is cheapening it or do you think it has a good way of presenting it to the general public?

A: I don't know. There's good and bad. I didn't see it, of course. I didn't even listen to it when it was going on.

Q: You did not. May I ask why?

A: I think I felt something like you just hinted at. That it's a movie about ... but it's a movie. There was a feeling. I don't have a valid criticism.

Q: If I was a non-Jewish American and I would say to you, "Dr. Blanc, I understand there is a Holocaust movie on tonight. I don't know much about it. Do you think I should watch it?" Would you tell me it's just a movie or would you tell me that

if you don't know anything about it, maybe a movie is better than nothing?

A: To tell the truth, my own attitude I sometimes feel is probably not the most desirable, because I do want people to get better knowledge, to get more knowledge than they have. It's just very often they have no knowledge. Just abysmal ignorance. So my attitude is that the only way to counter abysmal ignorance is by serious study. Therefore, I would tend to probably say that movies and things like that are in a category with popular or popularized literature, as opposed to the real thing.

Q: For pragmatic reasons, would you rather have a movie like *Holocaust* be presented to 200 million Americans or would you rather say the ones who want to study it seriously on university levels should study it and the rest of the population should know nothing about it? Or would you say for pragmatic reasons they should see a movie like *Holocaust*?

A: There's some truth in what you say that people are not going to study seriously except for a minority; therefore, this business of serious study is addressing a minority. But if you want this to really be spread so that the whole world understands, maybe it makes some sense to be less finicky about the type of study because any way things are not going to be studied in that way, like what you said, for pragmatic reasons. Maybe. But that's a question of philosophy about education and I'm afraid that my philosophy about education is no good.

Q: I think it's too good for practicality.

A: My philosophy is the kind of thing that's based on a kind of a concept that you need education and the university, read books. Not to say it's not good. It's not good enough. But I don't know that the other thing, mass media education, is good enough. There must be a way in which the mass media can really, really do in education. I occasionally hear things. I'll give you an example. Yehuda

Bauer. Mass media. He was talking on the radio, a whole series of lectures, which were beautiful, which were very good. I'm sure, but it's a matter of faith only, that it's going to influence in the sense that it's going to make people sit up and realize more things than they had realized before because before the [unintelligible] knew nothing. They knew vague....

Q: Do you think it should be taught on the high school level already? I'm talking about America because I'm sure...

A: You should know what answer I'm going to give you. All the things that ought to be taught to the people in general should be done by people who know, themselves, so there has to be teachers who know and not only teachers, but programmers, people who make education. Who makes education? What makes education? There's a whole set of the population that has absorbed certain things and, having absorbed them thoroughly, they've also absorbed certain methods of imparting them to the population. I don't know that there are enough people like that yet. In fact, if they were good, then they should be procured. If not, there should be some kind of program to teach teachers, to teach people. And they should get certainly the more rarefied, the more elitist type of education. I mean they should be taught as teachers, and as teachers, they should be reminded and taught again and again certain things which are part of this world that we live in. You're asking me a very difficult question. In other words, how do you teach people the things that come out of this Holocaust period? How do you teach that there's evil in the world and that something ought to be done about it and one ought not to let forces get their way which are clearly forces of evil. Not that the Germans are like that and not that the Jews are like that. No, the world is constituted like that. How do you get this across to people, how the world is and if you can do something about it so much the better, but maybe you can't.

Q: You were very young at the time. You were only 19. Did you consider yourself a religious person at the time? Did you come from a religious home? Were you observant?

A: [Unintelligible]

Q: Did the experiences during the war change your attitude towards religion or your own practice of it?

A: I cannot see anything that has to do with religious....

Q: No. Your own personal feelings.

A: My personal feelings have slightly changed over the years. I come from a non-religious family, non-religious background, non-religious education, but that's a different area. And if things have changed, it's only because I got more interested in some subjects having to do with religion, say the Jewish religion specifically, which I had in my background because as a non-religious kid I still had teachers who taught me the Bible, Talmud, [unintelligible], Hebrew language certainly. So I had a non-religious Jewish background, which included Hebrew and also, therefore, a little Talmud. So the only thing that's changed is more study in this direction, more looking into facets of Judaism or Jewish thinking which I hadn't [unintelligible].

Q: What are you referring to? Any thoughts like "If there is a God, how did he permit that?" That kind of thing.

A: There is no God. That is no problem for me.

Q: That's how you felt. In other words, there was no change in your feelings and attitude.

A: No, not towards that.

Q: How about the feeling of forgiveness for the people who have committed the atrocities? Not as a generality to all the Germans, but specifically the ones who

were the criminals. Did you ever feel that they should be forgiven or that you have forgiven them or the victims could forgive them?

A: The notion of forgiveness doesn't come into it. Forgiveness sounds like a religious notion. I don't know. Forgiving is not a familiar notion to me. If my kids do something wrong, it's not a question of forgiving them. Do you know what I mean? Does forgiving mean that before you forgive them, you attribute some particular guilt to them and then you take it off? I don't attribute any guilt to them. If he...Eichmann, when he was on trial.... "you got a hold of Eichmann, good, there's no point. He should be shot right away and that's it." I had the feeling that they made too much of a fuss over it..

Q: That answers my question beautifully. What about your political views? You obviously were very educated for a 19 year old already and you must have had some very firmly established political views.

A: I sure did.

Q: Did they change through the war experience or did they just get strengthened in the direction in which you were going?

A: Coming through the war and meeting these survivors and doing a little work with them absolutely clinched what you might call Zionism. I had been a Zionist before in the very specific sense that I had been in favor before of the notion of Jewish statehood, Jewish independence, Jews working for, fighting for a stretch of land of their own. But remember before I could argue back and forth like you do when you are in your late teens at the university. You'd argue back and forth and think, "Well, is it really right, and what about the Arabs? And is there a better way?" For instance, there was a program which I kind of liked around here, which called itself the Binational State Idea. There were two groups that advocated not a Jewish state, but a binational state that could take

care somehow of both the Jews and the Arabs. There was a group of university professors called B'rich Shalom. I don't know if you ever heard of it. Some of the oldsters are still survivors of that movement. And there was one political party, a political movement, which also for a while, at least, advocated the same thing, a binational state. And I thought that would be nice because would it be more right? I mean it would get you your Jewish state, but it would refrain from taking away from the local population some of the things which are their rights as much as ours. I thought that would be nice. So my Zionism was one thing that got clinched by the experiences. There was no more hesitation about the Jewish state and the fact that by coming into being it might cause injustice to some other people, the local Arabs.

Q: You weren't worrying about the Arabs any more.

A: No. Let them worry about themselves. I can't do both.

Q: So you were an American citizen and in 1946 or so you came back to the United States. Did you then continue your studies in the United States?

A: That's right. In fact, now it occurs to me that I misled you. I didn't have my BA. I said I had already a BA in Linguistics. No, I had had two years towards it.

Q: I thought you were very young.

A: No, my complete misrecollection. What happened was at the end of 1946, I was out of the Army and I went back to Harvard. In 1948 I finished the B.A. When I came in 1948, I came with the whole thing clinched up. The B.A. over and done with, and my internalizing the whole Holocaust period also over and done with. When the war started, there was no question which way to go.

Q: So in 1948, you came here?

A: Of course.

Q: During the fighting.

A: Sure.

Q: And that's why you came?

A: Yes.

Q: And the Holocaust had a lot to do with it? And your experiences?

A: Of course. If I had not been in the Holocaust, I might not have come or I might have hesitated or I might have come anyway, but having been there....

Q: So it changed your life really.

A: At least, shall we say, it pushed me in one of the several directions that you have at that age. I got pushed into or shall I say strengthened into.

Q: Did you ever think of moving to Israel before the war?

A: Of course.

Q: You did so you were a Zionist then.

A: That's what I meant when I said I came from a Zionist upbringing where it was kind of the natural thing to do.

Q: You fought in the 1948 War and you joined the Army right away. You fought here. Were you hurt in that war?

A: Sure, that's how I got blinded.

Q: And then after that you continued your studies here.

A: Yes, but first I went back to the States to visit my parents.

Q: You were not married?

A: No. And I went there both to be home for a while and to see about rehabilitation for myself. I learned Braille at home in rehabilitation, and the greatest thing was I went to get a guide dog whom I brought back with me. And for almost 30 years, until the last couple of years when it became impossible to walk properly because of this neuromuscular condition which I developed, I was walking with dogs. It's been a great part of my life experience, but that's a different subject.

Very different indeed.

Q: I can't thank you enough because we do have interviews with American soldiers and American officers and many non-Jewish ones, but I think your story is unique in itself, and I thank you very, very much.

A: I thank you and I will thank you even more if you can manage to get this book by Yehuda Bauer. By the way, he's got two or three books by now. I just know that one.

Q: I am going to get it and I hope that Emory University has a Holocaust library. And they do teach Hebrew. There is a Chair of Judaica there, and I do hope that I will get the book and I will bring it with me and send it to them so that it will become part of the library.

A.: I'm not sure he's in the country now, but I think it would be extremely worthwhile if you can get hold of it. I never met him, but I've talked to him on the phone and I get his radio talks.

[Interruption on tape. Conversation resumes as follows.]

Q: Where did you get your lieutenancy?

A: The actual thing was known as The Infantry School in Atlanta, Georgia.

Q: Atlanta, Georgia.

A: Atlanta, Georgia, if I'm not mistaken. The reason I'm hesitating is because there was another camp there, which was called Camp [unintelligible] which was in Macon, Georgia. That's where I spent my basic training. And officer training was in this TIS, The Infantry School, and that, I believe, was in Atlanta. If not, it must be right near.

Q: And now the tape is going to go right back to Atlanta, Georgia.

[The following comments were made by Ms. Singer after the interview.]

This is August 21, 1980. I'm in Tel Aviv. I realized how much of what I saw and heard did not get across on the tape.

Dr. Blanc, as you can tell, is a very young man still. I mean a fairly young man. He looks a good 30 or more years older than he is. What he did not admit as freely or as positively as I could see is that, in fact, his experiences in Germany in 1945 and in Austria in 1946 did shape his life. Not in so far as his political orientation is concerned and not as far as his religious orientation was concerned. He came from a Reform home and from a non-religious, but Zionist, home so the seed was there. The impact of what he saw and what he felt, which he is not willing to get in touch with and therefore cannot verbalize, I saw in his face.

The man came here in 1948 to fight. He was an American citizen; he came to fight and at the very beginning of his fighting, was blinded completely. One eye is completely hollow and empty. There is nothing there. The other eye is blind. There is a specific lisp and certain facial habits, such as smacking his lips and blowing in a certain way which obviously has something to do with the injury, not with nervousness or anything like that. He has been blind for over 30 years, has never stopped working, got his Ph.D., and he is a professor and a very highly respected member of the Israeli academic community.

In addition to these problems, he is now completely, totally, incapacitated physically. I can give you that information because a man I work with, Dr. Harry Mendelson in New York, is his lifelong friend. As a matter of fact, they got their B.A.'s together at Harvard in the forties. So I can give you the medical explanation of his other incapacity, but it probably is not important. What is important to know is that he is

completely homebound or wheelchair bound. He lifts himself from a chair to a wheelchair. He maneuvers that way. He wears a brace on his leg, but he is physically crippled. It is a neuromuscular kind of a condition.

I am personally convinced that if this man had not been in the American Army in Germany and in Austria in 1945, 1946, he would never have gotten here in 1948 and his life would have taken a completely different turn. What you may hear as lack of emotionality in his answers on the subject of atrocities, of hatred of Germans, or SS, or Nazis, of forgiveness...I wonder whether that came across on the tape. My own interpretation is this man has transformed these feelings into action, into a dedication, into his life's work; into what he is doing with his family, with his students, with his life in this country. I don't think he can afford the kind of emotionality that we have very often heard from people who have been shocked and appalled at the atrocities. This man cannot afford self pity, he cannot afford tears, he cannot afford this type of emotion. This is my personal impression and I think I am right.

There is a marvelous gentleness about the man and a marvelous sensitivity. There are no tears and no sadness, just tremendous strength and dedication towards working against any such evil ever in the future. He is very pragmatic in his way. We shut off the tape deck because he was extremely tired, and I had taken a lot of his time and he wanted to talk about his friend, Dr. Mendelson, who is also my friend. We then went back to the subject of the movie, *The Holocaust*. As you heard on the tape, he did not watch it. I told him how I personally felt about it, that I agreed with many of my friends who are survivors of concentration camps, that it was, in fact, an insult to their memories of what they lived through. To them, in many ways, it is a mockery and an insult, but at the same time, it has reached many, many millions of people who did not know anything about it and, if they knew a little bit, they didn't believe it. I told him some instances of young hoodlums who had vandalized the synagogue the week before and

after seeing the movie, came to their priest and returned the things, saying that they were ashamed of themselves. They never realized what the Jewish people had suffered. So after telling him of some of the side effects of this show in the United States, he did say that he had no way of knowing that, that from a pragmatic point of view, of course, if that's what it does outside of Israel, then it's a marvelous thing and he's all for it.

But he is uncompromising in the educational point of view. He feels that it's a question of morality and teaching from the word growing up, just teaching the Holocaust -- by teaching history, teaching economics, teaching what makes for this kind of a situation; what makes this possible.

One personal note: I was not as shattered as I sometimes am after an interview; not as shaken to tears, but I was certainly overwhelmed and impressed by this person -- how he maneuvers, how he works. There are Braille books, Braille typewriters, all kinds of taping machines. He works with tapes with students. I can't tell you how impressed and how awed I am by this man, with the way he handles his legs and himself and the total lack of self-pity, the total acceptance of his blindness as well as the physical crippling. Also, I had seen photographs of him from his early years, from his early twenties. This was a six foot-two, magnificent, gorgeous young man and, as I say, he looks about 80 and he is completely deformed, facially and in his body.

One happy note: I did meet his wife. She is a delightful woman. Very, very nice, very intelligent, and obviously handles the situation with as much aplomb as he does.

I don't know of how much value this tape will be to the Witness to the Holocaust Project. I do know that I met a very valuable and very special human being, and I was delighted to have done that. I will try to get the book by Yehuda Bauer and I will try to bring that with me.

I repeat that this is a very interesting situation. This man is a doer. He's not a crier; he's not a complainer; he's not an emotional dweller on things, but whatever he experienced

there, he really put into action and still is doing so. So his life was very, very deeply affected.

I am almost sure that what I am going to put on tape now is not on the tape, that it is something he told me after the tape deck was shut off. And that is that when he was in Innsbruck, which is late 1945 and early 1946, what he was doing 90% of his time was helping refugees and survivors to escape into Italy, illegally, legally, etc. He was in a position where he was able to shuffle papers in the right direction. Until the time when he left Innsbruck, he was the second lieutenant who was helping the Israelis get the DP camp people out of Europe and into Israel and over borders. After I had told him about Dr. Crawford and that Dr. Crawford was the head of this project and how dedicated he is and what he had done and that he had just visited Israel, etc., he told me then that his superior officer was a non-Jew, who then after Dr. Blanc's departure and return to the United States, took over the work that Haim Blanc was doing all those years. And he started working with the Israelis in helping to get the displaced persons and the survivors out of Europe and into Israel. And I think that is a very important phase of what he made of his life as an aftermath of what he saw and what he felt and what he witnessed.

I forgot to add that Dr. Blanc was recently honored and he was the recipient of a \$5,000 Rothschild award. I don't have further information on the specific date and the purpose or what the award was given for. I'll try to get that.

This is about a day later, and I have tried to get the book or any one of the three books by Dr. Yehuda Bauer. And let me tell you something. I don't recommend to anybody to try to buy a book in Israel. I'm going to be here for another week and wish me luck. I hope I can get at least one of those books.

This is on another subject. As you know, I have the name of Rabbi Judah Nadich, who lives in New York, on my list of people to contact and to interview. I met here in Tel Aviv

his daughter and son-in-law. Rabbi Nadich is in New York. I'll get in touch with him after the holidays. I guess he'll be busy now during the Jewish holidays. However, I was wondering whether you do have in your library the book which describes, I understand, quite extensively Rabbi Nadich's experiences at the time of the liberation of concentration camps. The name of the book is *Eisenhower and the Jews*. Please let me know whether you have it and, if not, whether you want it. Maybe I can even get it and have Rabbi Nadich inscribe it. So this is just for the record, because my head isn't working so well. So please keep track of this.