

NAME: FRED BOHM
INTERVIEWER: LORRIE MELL
CAMP: NORDHAUSEN
DATE: JANUARY 9, 1979

A: My name is Fred Bohm, B-0-H-M

Q: And the address?

A: 3060 Pharr Court, Atlanta, 30305.

Q: And the date of your birth?

A: August 26, 1921

Q: And your age at the time of the liberation?

A: It was 1945...24.

Q: At the beginning of the war, what were your occupational plans? What profession or vocation were you planning?

A: I was in the middle of no plans at all since I just had come from Europe a couple of years before. As a matter of fact, I lived in Hitler's Germany and so what I am going to say I can describe from both ends, really, first as the persecuted one and then as the conquerer, so to speak.

Q: What is your present occupation?

A: I'm an industrial designer.

Q: And what was the military unit you were part of when you went into Nordhausen?

A: The 104th Infantry Division

Q: And your rank at that time?

A: Technical Corporal

Q: Did you go into any other camp, liberate any other camp, other than Nordhausen?

A: No

Q: So we're going to be talking about that one.

A: Basically, yes

Q: I'm going to start back and ask you when you heard first about the camps?
Naturally, you lived in Germany so I am going to let you start your story.

A: I was aware even as a kid. I lived in Vienna until I was 18. I left Vienna roughly 1 1/2 years after Germany had taken over. Living in middle Europe in the 1930's, we were aware of what was going on in Germany, us Jews moreso than possibly other people. And I must say that the persecution in Germany started rather slow and consisted mainly of petty annoyances. We had some relatives in Germany who, for years, refused to leave because they thought it would "blow over." And even though they were hindered from a full and free life, it was not bad enough until about 1938 or 1939 to really make them consider leaving the country. In Austria, I think they put what they had learned in Germany over the years to immediate use and things became much rougher.

Q: Such as?

A: Specifically, the Kristallnacht, the 10th of November, which really hit us very hard, not only physically but psychologically because even until then we thought well, it's going to blow over and it couldn't be as bad as it eventually turned out to be. My father, on the 10th of November, and my wife's father too, as a matter of fact, were both arrested. Trudie, where did Daddy wind up, in Dachau? No, no, he was released....

TRUDIE BOHM: He wound up at the local police station because it was a fluke, really. His last name started with a "T." They went through the alphabet and by the time they got to the "T's" and "Ws," there were not enough forms left over to fill out these two men and they were put in a hold box with the criminals and kept there for twelve days, and then my mother was able to get them out. But

everybody else up to the letter "T" was shipped off to Dachau.

Q: And where were you living?

TRUDIE BOHM: I was living at home with my family.

A: Also in Vienna, but this doesn't answer your question. Of course, we were aware of the camps.

Q: What kind of things had you heard about the camps?

A: That there were concentration camps and that there was a tremendous amount of cruelty involved. At that time, which was before the war actually started, we were aware of two of them, Dachau and Buchenwald, and there may have been others, but those are the ones that were more or less known. And they were not used only for Jews but, of course, for anybody else who objected to the system. My father wound up in Dachau and was released after three or four months and this is again an indication that things weren't as bad as they eventually turned out to be. He was released because in World War I he had fought in the Austrian Army. This took place the early part of 1939 and they were still releasing people for that reason.

Q: And then what happened? When did you leave Vienna?

A: I left one month after the war started, at the end of October 1939. I had some relatives in New York, and they filled out the necessary papers and what not.

Q: And your family?

A: My parents stayed there and subsequently went illegally to Yugoslavia just to get out, because then it became evident that people had to leave. They went to Yugoslavia, and, as it turned out, the Nazis marched into Yugoslavia a few weeks afterwards. A group of a couple of hundred fled to the Italian border in desperation, and the Italians were nice enough to let them in and put them into a camp at the southern end of Italy across the Straits of Sicily. They put them into an abandoned army garrison and told them, "You can stay here as long as you

want; nobody is going to bother you; you can barter with the natives." And I understand that at the first of his play *The Deputy*, Hockhuth blamed the Pope for not speaking up strongly enough. The fact is that through the influence of the Pope and even Mussolini, they [the Italians] steadfastly refused to hand over refugees to the Germans. My parents' group was one who was really saved because of their influence.

Q: So your parents survived? They went with this group to Italy?

A: They survived and stayed there until after the invasion of Italy. The Germans just retreated and from one day to the next, they found themselves in Allied hands, and FDR made the humanitarian gesture and said, "I'm going to let how many, 2000..."

TRUDIE BOHM: 1000.

A: "...1,000 refugees into the United States." And the only ones that were available was this group in Italy, because France had not been liberated yet. So during the height of the war, these thousand people are put into a convoy and brought to the States. At that time, I was in the Army and getting ready to go overseas, and, of course, we had been out of touch. One day I got a telegram from them. I think that they went into Canada. "We are here" and so on which really floored me!

TRUDIE BOHM: It was through the Red Cross that it came.

Q: Did you have any idea that they were coming?

A: I had no idea. I couldn't see how anybody in the middle of the war, under these circumstances, could come from Europe to the States, aside from being a wounded veteran. And we didn't see each other, because the next day I was going to Europe.

Q: When did you finally see them again? How many years?

A: Our total separation was about 6 years, from 1939 to 1945. And my fear was that they were going to find haven here for the duration of the war, and, of

course, I realized that at the end of the war I would be in Europe and I thought we would cross each other again. But Truman subsequently made the haven permanent. And they stayed in an abandoned army camp in Oswego, near the Canadian border. Finally when I came back from Europe I ran into them.

Q: That's quite a story!

A: It really has nothing to do with the camps, except it may add some flavor.

Q: It's interesting. We hear so many sad stories. To hear something that had kind of a happy ending is nice once in a while. Tell me about now what happened when you went back to Germany and about Nordhausen.

A: I want to preface this by saying that I volunteered for combat service because of my personal convictions and interest in this whole affair. I must also say that my fellow GI's, most of whom were obviously American born, had no particular feeling for fighting the Germans and also thought that any stories that they had read in the paper which I had told them out of firsthand experience were either considered not true or at least exaggerated. And it did not sink in, what this was all about, until we got into Nordhausen.

Q: What did you expect to see?

A: Exactly what I saw.

Q: What you saw. So you were prepared.

A: I was totally prepared, yes. No, I can't really say this, because to know about it and to actually see it are two different things. To see photographs is one thing, but to go in and smell and be exposed to this horror you cannot really be ready for that. But what really struck me is the impact it made on the other guys.

Q: I'd like to hear about that.

A: They were staggered, literally. They were sick.

Q: Sick physically?

A: Just about, yes. And Nordhausen was not only a concentration camp, it was also

a supplier of labor for a B-2 factory which was in some nearby mountain, so the people there were relatively well-fed because they had to produce 8,10,12 hours a day; I don't know how much.

Q: So they weren't the walking skeletons we've heard about.

A: No, except the ones who became too weak were just left to die, and when we came in there were mountains of bodies. And we laboriously tried to pick out the ones who still showed signs of life. We used the German civilians to help us in that, and, frankly, I must say, that they were as sick as our guys were.

Q: The German civilians' reactions were very similar to the American soldier?

A: Yes

Q: Tell me about that.

A: They always said that "We had no idea that this sort of thing was going on," and in many instances it is possibly true, because certainly these things weren't publicized. I mean they also knew that there were camps and slave laborers and what not, but the real conditions, of course, were kept secret.

Q: So your impression is that the German civilians that went into the camp with you were as overcome by this experience as the American soldiers were.

A: Just about, yes. Some of them refused to lend a hand because they said, "We had no part in this." And at that time, nobody would accept that as an excuse, and then they offered to pitch in. The immediate job was to separate the dead from the living, the living from the dead.

Q: What date did you go into this camp?

A: I remember it was April 1945, because FDR died exactly when we were there. We stayed in Nordhausen for a couple of days.

Q: So right around the time of FDR's death.

A: Yes, the middle of April.

Q: Were you the first troops in?

- A: Yes
- Q: What unit were you a part of? You told me that earlier.
- A: 104th Infantry, 829th Combat Engineers.
- Q: You went in and you enlisted the help of the German civilians to separate the dead from the living. Those prisoners that were alive, how did they respond to you? You spoke German, so you could talk with them.
- A: They were overcome. I'll tell you, frankly, I didn't spend too much time with them because I fought my own private war. And since I did speak German, there were a number of survivors who came to me and said, "Look, there are people here who were guards, and they are still around here. Why don't you pick them up?" And I said, "I'd love to pick them up. Show me where they are." I spent quite a bit of time with the help of the prisoners to round up some of the characters who had been involved in the camp.
- Q: They had been guards?
- A: Yes, and some of them had lived in Nordhausen. They just put on civilian clothing when the war was over, and since there were no records, nobody had any reason to look for them or to make a specific search.
- Q: Except that the prisoners identified some of them for you.
- A: Yes. So I spent really a lot of time going on a goose chase, and in some cases we actually found some.
- Q: Those that you found, did you have any particular orders concerning the treatment of these guards?
- A: No, because there was no mechanism in existence to treat them. Since we were combat troops, all the administrative people hadn't come into town yet. One incident which may be interesting, gruesome, is that we picked up one guy who obviously must have been pretty high up. It was not funny, but odd, that after a prisoner had pointed out his house to us and we went there and knocked on the

door and his wife opened and I could see him -- I assumed it was him -- looking out of the room in the rear, as soon as he saw a uniform he put on his hat and was ready to go, which is exactly what happened when they came for somebody. With one look, you knew that the jig was up, so to speak. And without any objections, he just went along and said, "Now what?" I don't remember it verbatim, but I spoke German to him and said, "You have two choices -- either we're going to shoot you or we'll hand you over to the Russians and they'll shoot you," which may have not been the right thing to say, but at the time it was a reasonable statement, I guess.

Q: What did happen?

A: But, in any case, we had this guy [this guard] in the back of the jeep looking for a place to bring him to. The MP's didn't want any part of him because it wasn't their kind of a thing. And then somebody said the CIC, which was the Counter Intelligence Corps, just moved into town. We drove back and forth through the streets, and the prisoners were sort of roaming around freely with no place to go, and they spotted him. They made a bee line after the jeep, just begging us to hand him over to them. Eventually somebody pointed out a house where the CIC was supposed to be headquartered, and I stopped the jeep and went in to look and when I came back, they had taken this guy off the jeep and that was the end of him.

Q: "They" meaning...?

A: The prisoners. I don't know whether they were Jews or Yugoslavs or Poles, or what not.

Q: But some of the people that had been at Nordhausen took your prisoner away?

A: Yes, and they literally trampled him to death. So obviously the feeling was very high on all sides. Somewhere, we have some photographs of what we found in Nordhausen, but I'm sure you have seen these before and so has everybody else.

- Q: Yes, but any photos, anything you want to share with us we would be happy to take.
- A: I don't know where they are; they must be buried someplace.
- Q: You talked some about the German civilians helping you separate the living from the dead and their reactions. When you saw the camp, did you have any feeling about the responsibility of the German civilians that were there?
- A: I know, from having lived there almost under those conditions, that there was an anti-Nazi minority; exactly how small or how big it was I don't think anybody knows. Today, of course, everybody was a part of it. I said this before. I don't think that the average German was aware of the details. If he was, they found it excusable, I think, from some of the statements that, "These are enemies of the state and they have to be kept separate." Torture was a debatable issue; there was no proof of it. I think that it had to do really with the socio-economic background. There were certain groups which were more ruthless or more believers in the traditional German authority than others. I have occasion to go back to Germany on business and even now I try to avoid discussions with people my age or older, because usually the question comes up, "How come you speak German so well?" I tell them why and the older ones are invariably going to say, "This was madness. We were always against it. We had no part in it." I don't really believe them every time. The younger ones, by contrast, are, I think, the most alert and conscientious people I've seen almost anywhere. Because of their not-too-distant history, I think they are more aware of what can happen if you don't question statements by authorities.
- Q: So you see a different generation....
- A: Very much so. Also, they're much more internationally minded; certainly the borders have not disappeared, but they are not as important as a free interchange and exchange of people. Travel's become much easier. We have friends in many

countries in Europe, and they just don't have these traditional animosities any more.

Q: Tell me what you can remember about the men in your unit--how they coped with this experience of going into this kind of a camp. Did you notice anything different in their behavior or anything they needed to do that they hadn't done before, in relation to having gone through this experience?

A: I think they felt all of a sudden the war had a meaningful purpose, that there was almost a reason for being over there.

Q: And that reason being?

A: That if they can do this sort of thing to people then we've got to put a stop to it or somebody has to put a stop to it. I think this went all the way up to and included Eisenhower, because I remember he came, not necessarily through Nordhausen, but I think both he and Marshall came through some camps and they were also staggered by what they saw. It certainly gave impetus to what we were doing.

Q: Did anyone in your unit ask to be relieved of a particular duty of getting the camp all sorted out?

A: I don't remember whether this was a volunteer effort or whether we were assigned to the work.

Q: Did you notice any particularly strong reactions other than the kinds of things you have already mentioned?

A: The general reaction couldn't have been stronger among the GI's. I'm sure they will never forget it.

Q: Did you notice whether the chaplains had a more active role in any way at this time, in relation to the soldiers in your unit?

A: Honestly, I can't.

Q: I'm trying to see if these experiences affected the soldiers in a way that they

perhaps needed to talk with someone about them. Did you write home about this experience?

A: No.

Q: Did you write to anyone in the States?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: Because the people with whom...they knew about these things. There was not much point.

TRUDIE BOHM: There was no specific detail in any of his letters such as where he was.

A: We couldn't, really.

TRUDIE BOHM: He would describe the countryside as being hilly or green. You could say that about 20 places. There would never be a specific description.

A: I wanted to give a hint as to our location, but....

TRUDIE BOHM: There was no hint. We lived in New York at the time [and from reading the daily papers], I could tell where his division was at all times and I kept a scrapbook of it and then I knew that's where he is. Then I would look back and what did he write two weeks ago today? Ah, that's the green place. But there was no hint in the letters, because it would have been censored. I would like to ask a question, if I may. It hadn't occurred to me earlier. Did you notice in any way that the men's reaction towards you as a living symbol of some of the inmates in this camp was changed in any way after their contact with the camp? [Aside to Lorrie Mell] Because we were the only Jewish family....

A: No, [unintelligible].

TRUDIE BOHM: In the 329th there were others?

A: Yes.

TRUDIE BOHM: Oh, just your buddies were just the non Jews. How did your

particular buddies react to you?

A: They made some remarks to the effect that "We didn't believe you; we thought you exaggerated; this puts a different light on your stories."

Q: But they didn't change their behavior [unintelligible]?

A: Being nicer or...?

TRUDIE BOHM: No. Saying that "I understand how you must feel, that these are part of your people." Some kind of empathy shown towards you. You didn't find that so?

A: No. I think that being Jewish is more important to us than to the others.

TRUDIE BOHM: I'm sure they did not think of your being Jewish in the first place.

A: No. They just saw a bunch of people who had been murdered, methodically, and the American has pity and empathy for the underdog or for the one who is suffering. It doesn't really matter who he is, whether it's because he is Jewish or what.

Q: Did you and some of the men in your unit talk about this experience together very much?

A: I don't think so, except that the ones who, after the first afternoon, hadn't been there initially all went over there to take a look for themselves. Also, they came back shattered. Again, it's one thing to see photographs, to hear, or read about this, and to be there and see it and feel it and smell it is something awful.

Q: But you didn't talk about it particularly afterwards?

A: No, because this would require, obviously, some show of emotion, and the average GI -- this is a generalization -- at least to one another wanted to be a tough guy. Of course, it came through but it didn't lead to any long discussions, such as "Joe, did you see that? How could they?"

Q: Some expressions of disbelief and wonderment, not really talking about it. When you came back, did you talk about this experience with your family?

- A: No. What you go through in combat is something that you can talk about, but unless somebody has been through it, you can't really describe it. You can describe it, but unless you have one with similar experiences, it's lost.
- Q: So you really didn't talk about it very much in the intervening years?
- A: No.
- Q: Why are you willing to talk about it now to us for this project?
- A: Because first of all, a long time has passed. Secondly, I'm aware of the fact that there have been statements made recently that call all of this an untruth, by, I think, supposedly respectable people, historians and what not. I think any evidence that can be brought up should be brought up and passed on.
- Q: Did you see the *Holocaust* TV show?
- A: Yes.
- Q: What did you think about it?
- A: I think it was a commendable enterprise, but it didn't come across. I think in the treatment, graphically, it was much too clean; the people were pink and fleshy. I think they should have filmed it in black and white and gotten some of the grimness into it. They were jumping into the ditch after being machine-gunned and....
- Q: It was too cosmetic?
- A: Much too cosmetic! Frankly, I think this film has to be made by Europeans.
- Q: Why?
- A: Because for one reason or another, they have all gone through it; I mean the middle-aged ones. If you see an Italian film or any other European film of that period, it has so much more realism than what Hollywood produces. And unless you've gone through it and you've been part of it, you can sense the fake and you can sense the genuine.
- Q: What do you think people can learn from this kind of thing? The *Holocaust*

show. These tapes.

- A: They can learn from this that first of all, you should not believe that it cannot happen here or anyplace else; and secondly, they should be aware of government statements that certain things have to be done in the interest of national security. This is why I think -- this has nothing to do with the camps -- Nixon was so dangerous because a lot of the stuff he pulled was done in the name of national security, and I remember that phrase from Hitler, that this was an excuse to do anything. I think humanity must learn to question this; if anything doesn't sit right or doesn't sound right then, damnit, get up on your hind legs and make noise! But again, I think you must have been burned once before you get the sensitivity for this sort of thing.
- Q: You think we have to experience something like this in order to really be aware?
- A: Yes. Particularly in this country. There is a total absence of this kind of organized persecution, and since, by and large, everybody has been free for the last 200 years, I think that there is a lack of, not awareness, but a lack of sensitivity towards these dangers that build up.
- Q: What about something like the civil rights movement in relation to what we are talking about?
- A: Looking at it from the black viewpoint?
- Q: Perhaps.
- A: The black experience is probably the closest thing to what has happened in Europe, not just in Germany but in other countries throughout the centuries. The gratifying part is that here it could be settled, not entirely peacefully, but nevertheless within the framework of the system.
- Q: This question is difficult because you lived in Germany. I would usually ask if this experience changed your political views in any way, but you were actually paying with your...how old were you when you came to the United States?

A: 18

Q: And you had lived through this and, of course, you had a political viewpoint at that time.

A: Yes.

Q: This experience probably just reinforced that particular viewpoint.

A: Yes, very much so.

Q: What did you think in relation to the Vietnam war and the kind of thing that happened in Germany, perhaps? Did it relate in any way to you?

A: Yes, it did. I have come to the conclusion that war is not the solution to anything. And aside from being Jewish, I was against the Vietnam war.

Q: For what reason?

A: I thought that the Vietnamese really had a right to their own government, and I really questioned the actual motives of our involvement there.

Q: Did you see the Holocaust as primarily a Jewish persecution?

A: Yes, within the framework of that TV production, even though I think towards the end they sort of broadened the scope to a fight for freedom or [unintelligible]for everybody on a more universal viewpoint, which I think is what also happens in the Anne Frank house in Amsterdam. Remember the various statements that not only she makes but when they today relate it to what is going on in South Africa?

Q: But this was not in the original diary.

A: No, but somebody added that; I don't know if it is the Dutch government or who.

TRUDIE BOHM: Yes, this may have been added subsequently. I see the Holocaust strictly from a Jewish point of view.

A: It's a question of whether it happened only to Jews or whether we see this as....

Q: Whether you see this as primarily a Jewish persecution.

A: Yes.

- Q: And why do you say "Yes" so readily? Of course, you have come out of that experience.
- A: Because it happened to have happened to us. At the time, and this goes back into the early days of Hitler and the whole Nazi movement, they were obviously looking for a scapegoat; they needed someone to blame the loss of World War I and the subsequent economic disaster on. Because certainly these were "superior" people, and these things couldn't happen to them, so somebody else had to be at fault. The one element that was readily available and visible were the international Jewry. Instead, in Austria, they may have picked on the Gypsies or...not the Gypsies but....
- TRUDIE BOHM: It was the one group that was completely intermingled within the German society. Therefore, a stab at them would cut right through and would give satisfaction to the rich and to the poor, to the city dweller, to the country dweller, and to every line of financial involvement. Whether it be a teacher or a businessman, it would cut right through and become very meaningful to every one of them in a personal way. They could find their own Jews to persecute, and as it turned out, they each did find their own.
- A: That is very true, because in the anti-Semitic propaganda, they portrayed the Jew as being the communist and also the capitalist.
- TRUDIE BOHM: As being the rich Jew, and as being the poor, dirty Jew.
- A: Yes. Depending on to whom they appealed, they stressed one or the other.
- TRUDIE BOHM: And I must say, it was a very clever choice because obviously it served their purpose so well. Germany today is almost *Judenrein*. Hitler lost the war; yet, the sad thing is that his prophecy came true.
- A: But let me tell you this, they are poorer for it. They may not even be aware of it, but we go back to Vienna on occasion, and the flavor is missing.
- Q: That's what I've heard.

A: It's so obvious. In just reading the newspapers, that drabness, the prose, the lack of any creative ability, and whatever they do goes back to the 19th century; they haven't done anything of significance since.

Q: And you attribute that to the loss of the Jewish population?

A: Yes, because they added so much richness and spice to the cultural life.

TRUDIE BOHM: They are hanging on. They have interwoven into the German language so many of the Jewish expressions which they are unaware of as coming from Yiddish and Jewish.

A: They don't even know it. And we also look at each other when they...

Q: This is in Vienna?

TRUDIE BOHM: Anywhere.

A: In Germany too.

TRUDIE BOHM: We sort of chuckled with each other because *Mashuggah*...now this is no German word!

A: And *goniff* and *mozzell*.

TRUDIE BOHM: Now this is said about a soccer player and there could be nothing more un-Jewish than a German soccer player, and for him to have *mozzell*, it's just odd to our ears. But they have used so many of the words that are incorporated into their high German today, and I think it's ironic.

A: I must tell you this. I was in Germany a couple of months ago. I came on the 10th of November, when the anniversary of the Kristallnacht took place, and I was gratified to read editorial coverage in almost every newspaper I picked up. Even after 40 years.

Q: What kind of things were they talking about?

A: We have to watch out that this sort of thing doesn't happen again, and we will never be able to undo what has been done.

TRUDIE BOHM: Say the whole thing.

A: I thought this was put very nicely. [What has been done] to our Jewish fellow citizens, not to an alien minority, but what we did to our Jewish fellow citizens.

TRUDIE BOHM: The German word is *Mitburger*. A *Burger* is a citizen and a *Mitburger* is someone who is a co-citizen of yours. In other words, not to some other alien group, but to our own. What we did to our own citizens.

Q: Did you plan your trip back to be there at that time?

A: No, it was purely accidental.

TRUDIE BOHM: And these were little hick towns where Fred was. This was not in Berlin or in Bonn or someplace. They were little towns all over the middle of Germany, and the papers throughout had the same headlines. And didn't this say something about asking forgiveness for the past deeds? They are very aware of that, both from the government level as well as from the younger people who are now the post-war generation. With the older ones, there just cannot be a meeting of the minds.

Q: Let me turn this tape over, and then we'll finish on the other side.

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

A: I was not unique in that reaction.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: Also in Germany. As a matter of fact, I took a train. I forgot where. It was a Sunday morning. There was only one woman in the compartment, and we started with some small talk, and again the question "How come you speak German even though you are obviously an American?" They can tell by the clothing, of course. Again, I told her and she said she remembers the time because she was always against it. I said yes, but I really didn't want to go into

and what the Russians did and this and that and the other. The final statement was when you go through this 20th century the way she had, you must question the existence of God and how can such things happen.

Q: Have you found any answer for yourself?

A: No

Q: Other than your original answer.

A: Frankly, I haven't looked for any other answers which is the easy way out, I guess.

Q: What do you feel needs to be done to make sure this never happens again?

A: I think we will need a very alert and totally free press. Not just press, I mean a communications system.

Q: So a combination of involved, interested, concerned people as well as open communication?

A: This is what I want to say. Both of us went to Dachau a couple of years ago. This was a pilgrimage for both of us, and, gratifyingly, if you can use that word in this connection, there were many, many school children being taken through the camp as part of their curriculum.

TRUDIE BOHM: Eight, nine years old.

A: Six?

TRUDIE BOHM: Not six.

A: Six I think they're a little too young.

TRUDIE BOHM: Eight, nine years old, with buses. They came as part of their instructional unit from all over the country. You could tell by the license plates. They were led through by their teachers. They were given the tour.

A: We wanted to listen to how this was being presented to them. As you probably know, Dachau has been completely razed to the ground. There is one building. One is a reconstructed barracks and the other is the museum which is the

photographic....

Q: Yes, I've seen that.

A: We wanted to listen to the presentation, but what I remember is the fact that the teacher said, "These things can happen if you don't ask questions of your elders."

Q: You heard the teacher saying this.

A: Yes. Don't just say "yes, yes." Ask questions if it doesn't sound right.

TRUDIE BOHM: And this is as un-German a concept as anything.

A: Yes, because you used to listen, and you said "yes", and you did not ask any questions.

Q: So that sort of underlined your feeling that there has been a change in Germany since with the new generation?

A: Yes, very much so. On the other hand, I was over there when they had liberated that hijacked plane about a year ago. They had a commando raid. And I remember the sentiment that was on the street, like they had won a military victory. It almost scared me, all this rambunctiousness [sic] about having accomplished the successful raid like that.

Q: What scared you about it?

A: I could see it in their eyes, the way they hung on the radio stations, that they were letting off steam.

TRUDIE BOHM: It was a national cry that portended for us a remembrance of bad things.

A: It was a national cry. When I see them do things together, in units, whether it's just a parade or what not I still get....

Q: It brings back some memories?

A: Yes. [Unintelligible.]

TRUDIE BOHM: We will never shake that. My kids can't understand that. But I have

that feeling. In America, somehow, this is never very strong. An American is sort of a patriot but not in the way that some of the European crowds can get.

Q: What is the word that you would use for their kind of patriotism?

A: It's almost like they are hypnotized, without rhyme or reason, they're just....

TRUDIE BOHM: It's all encompassing.

A: It's very powerful.

TRUDIE BOHM: And it leads to nothing [unintelligible]. To go back to one of your earlier questions, you said what else do you think would prevent this to happen again and you said something about the free press. I think another very important concept is economic security, that we are one world and we must keep an eye that no area becomes so needy. Germany had been down and out and therefore it made it possible for Hitler to rise.

A: Because they had nothing, from their viewpoint. Not from a minority viewpoint or from a Jewish viewpoint. They had nothing to lose by joining him. They had unemployed by the millions, the inflation was unheard of and so this guy said, "This is not really your fault; it's somebody else's and follow me and you can get your pride back, and your work and so on." And even with all that, he never got the majority of the vote. In the last elections, I think he drew about barely over 30% in 1932.

TRUDIE BOHM: But then he took matters into his own hands. He used his strong arm techniques, and he didn't need the vote anymore after that. And every country fell into his hands like a plum, one by one.

A: But we are talking about two different things: to have the psychological strength to resist this sort of thing and also if the economic situation is lousy. I think this is what we are after. Not that they're nice guys because they're well off; that's something else too.

TRUDIE BOHM: They are nice guys because they are well off.

A: They act civilized because they are well off, but what I am really asking myself is is it just a facade or how deep does it really go? With the younger generation, I don't have much doubt that they will not let anything like this happen again.

Q: You feel quite convinced of that.

A: Yes, but this is based on a very small sampling, a handful of people.

Q: You can only speak from your own experience, what you know.

A: Exactly.

Q: Before we finish our tape, is there anything that you want to share that we haven't talked about, that we might have left uncovered about your experience at Nordhausen? Is there something about the camp itself you want to share that we haven't talked about yet?

A: No. I don't think there was anything else; in fact, I'm trying to remember whether we came across any other places like that.

TRUDIE BOHM: Near what city is Nordhausen?

A: Halle. Near Leipzig; it's in the eastern zone. Remember when we went to visit Henry and his mother? That they happened to live in that area, and we were driving through some....

TRUDIE BOHM: Oh yes. Little hick town.

A: Little hick town. There were some obviously old barracks standing there, and she said -- and his mother is now in her 60's or 70's -- that as far as she knew there were some prisoners there during the end of the war, something to that effect. A very off-hand remark.

TRUDIE BOHM: And the marker on the town square showed "Nordhausen - 3 kilometers." Do you remember that?

A: That's right.

TRUDIE BOHM: And that's what brought it on.

A: We were going to the East German border for a look see.

Q: And Nordhausen is the name of the camp and not the town?

TRUDIE BOHM: No, it's Dachau, the town and the camp and Nordhausen, the town and the camp.

A: And it wasn't until we were going near the border that I made some remark about Nordhausen and she said somebody was locked up. I don't know whether she said Jews or prisoners.

Q: A very off-hand remark....

TRUDIE BOHM: Off-hand. It was without a personal touch, and this was a woman who lived within a few miles of that area.

A: Also, to balance all these pros and cons, when we went to Dachau, we had rented a car. I knew where it was. Dachau is on the map so we found our way into the village, but we wanted to get to the camp. We had to ask repeated questions how to get there. We had a hard time to get there.

TRUDIE BOHM: And we speak the language and we had difficulty with people pointing us to the main road in that direction.

A: They never heard of it.

TRUDIE BOHM: That's right.

Q: And Dachau isn't a very big town, is it?

A: No, of course not.

TRUDIE BOHM: But the camp is a little outside of the town, and we didn't know which of the *landstrasse*¹ to take. Which direction should we take.

Q: You didn't see any signs telling you where the camp was?

TRUDIE BOHM: No. I don't know why there weren't. There should have been because for people like us who pilgrimage there, it would be easy to just find it on their own without having to stop.

¹Two-lane roads

Q: I want to thank you for your time on this and for sharing this kind of information with us.