

LIBERATOR: WILLIAM H. WEINBERG
INTERVIEWER: LILLY SINGER
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LILLY SINGER (Q)today is August 6, 1981, I'm at Rutgers University, interviewing Dr. William Weinberg, whose address is 304 Grant Ave., Highland Park, N.J. 08904. Dr. Weinberg was born March 2nd, 1921, and was 24 years of age at the time of liberation. After college, he went into the Army; at that time he graduated planning to be an elementary schoolteacher, possibly staying on a farm on which he grew up. He is presently a professor of industrial relations, and he is the department chairman at the School of Institute of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers University. He was in the Third Division of 50th Infantry Regiment, Company B, and at the time of liberation, he was a private. He is involved in two experiences, both in Alsace, one was a camp near ~~Chernack~~ ^{Shirmrick} (spelling?); the other one was a factory south of Strassburg, called ~~Ehrpuck~~ ^{ILKirk} Grafen~~stock~~ ^{statten (?)} (spelling?); there were two more, which we will mention later.

A In the Rhine Valley it was the east side of the Rhine River, crossed there / near ~~Warrens~~ ^{Worms} (spelling?)...I don't know the name of the town there, in fact I was trying to look it up...I had somebody's zerox of our division's history... I have an idea where it is, but I will have the name of the town. And then I was at Dachau...I GUESS THE day it was liberated, or perhaps the day after.

Q Well, now that is very interesting.

A Well, I really... (unintelligible sounds here)... _____ didn't stay there long, but the third one I mentioned, the one in the Rhine Valley was one that I liberated all by myself.

Q Oh tell me about that, that sounds very good.

A my story, but I was in an Infantry outfit, we crossed the Rhine I guess toward the end of March ... I could probably dig the date out...

Q March, 1945.

A March, 1945, and it was either March, probably March 27th ... we crossed on the 26th

A the very next day.

Q Could we possibly have a copy of this? Do you think?

A Yes, it shows where the division was, and it was somewhere in here, between Lampert-heim and Wuttenfeld, I guess, somewhere in there. I was a scout then and another fellow and I, after crossed the Rhine River, we went down this way, south, to cross to the east bank of the Rhine River, and south to contact another American outfit that had crossed here.

Q Okay.

A What had happened was that the outfit we were looking for - apparently didn't get very far inland, then we found we had gotten about 5 miles behind the German line. And so it was a stressful evening, because we went ... tried to get back through the German line. ~~Army~~

Q You were cut off ^{literally from your forces} ~~from the rest of the~~ of course,

A Yes, so that we spent of the night trying to get back, and eventually ^{at dawn} ~~after awhile~~ we realized we had reached an area, that we were just going around the Germans... the Americans were right here, we were just probably behind the lines. And comeback, it was not a matter of people holding hands and forming a ~~line~~ specific line off a huge ^{gaps distances} ~~gaps~~ just between armed forces, and ^{stayed in} ~~heard of~~ a house that had lots of wine, and so stuck my shirt full of wine bottles on the assumption I may as well drown if I was going to die. I found a box of cigars ... at that time I was a cigar smoker, you know, and I had a pretty good sense of maps and I had seen the map of the area the day before when I set out on the scouting Expedition

Q How many were you?

A Just two ~~of us~~.

Q Oh, I was visualizing...

A Just two of us. No, it was a contact patrol... that's what it was. Scouting expedition. So, when we came back we found traces of where my company had been.

There were some German bodies they still were going in that direction

in fact, they had run into a bicycle ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ reconnaissance troop of Germans

A of Germans and they had abandoned their bicycles, so we picked out bicycles and drove down the road to try to catch up with the outfit.

Q That would have been your own ^{outfit} idea?

A My own ^{outfit} ~~idea~~. Well, we found some guys who were wounded and who were telling us ^{that, yes} that they were a couple of miles up ahead, and there was no civilian around us, so it was a sure sign there was ^{some} ~~no~~ fighting - people were still hiding in the houses. And we came to an open field and we came upon barracks surrounded by barbed wire and it was very similar to what I had seen in Alsace...A Chermak....

Q Give me a fine reference... this is March, 1945, ~~and Chermak would have been October or November of 1944~~

A And Chermak would have been October or November, probably of 1944.

Q Thanks.

A ^{But it seemed to be the same model} Everything you say ^{I knew} ~~of those~~ ^{dog runs} barracks buildings and watch tower ^{so it was a prison.}

Q And fenced in?

A Yes, fenced in. Yes.

Q What type of fence? Barbed wire? Electrified?

A Well, I can't remember if it was electrified, I think it was but I am not sure.

But there were layers of wire with a dog ^{my} ~~on~~ it, and there was much barbed wire.

And there were watch towers, I think on all four corners, so ... or there may have been a watch tower only in one corner. I am guessing, but there must have been ob....

maybe 15 buildings, maybe 20. Low barracks. And my companion was about 18 or 19 yrs old, and we did things together, we were home bodies, we would do things together....

^{if we had to dig a fox hole} ~~we did it together~~ I had complete confidence in his caution and ability as a soldier, and he was nervous about going in ... getting close to the ^{buildings} ~~borders~~

(unintelligible sounds here)...

(private phone conversation)
an interruption ensues with family here... (Judy, car, arrangements etc)

A (by way of explanation:) I have three daughters and one is in Kansas, and she has luggage, and she wants ride and the other one is here so she is chauffeuring every-

A ..and the third one has a party and she has to leave....

Q The problem of getting three daughters to one place...okay.

Now that was daytime...driving...

A Oh this was bright daylight ... it was a very clear day... what happened was I felt there some ^{real} risk involved and there it could have been an army barracks or some thing or someone with troops in there, generally there were SS men involved in these camps....at least with our experience at Chermak. _____ factory _____ people of that sort _____ and I felt that if there were prisoners in there who ought to be told that they were free, so I ^{felt} thought it was kind of dumb at the time to risk my life, just knock on the door and tell people it was over, but I thought that they could be starving to death for days, ^{they'd be} afraid to leave. So, he covered me, he stayed in a ditch and I guess it was ^{more} for morale purposes than for actual help, because _____ shoot at me, _____ but I felt he at least ought to at least be protected, I was willing to take the risk. So I went to the main gate, and as I recall it was closed but not locked. It was a big barbed wire gate, rather large, about the size of that wall I would say. And I remember being very concerned about the dogs.... I had a paratrooper carbine of that kind, it was a pistol (stock ?) in it... it had 15 shots in it, and I just realized there wouldn't be 15 dogs there, and I wasn't sure what it would take to kill a dog, but there were no dogs. I guess it was about that wide between the double fences, and I was really having trouble with the other gate when.... I was really concerned with the very erratic ^{I had a} feeling ^{these were} the ^{here} way people. ^{but} it didn't seem like an abandoned place, ^{but} there was no one visible, though, and I was afraid to go closer to the barracks, and I stood there and shouted in German - that if anyone was there, they had better come out with their hands up.

Q Do you speak German?

A Well, I knew Yiddish, and better at that time than now, but I had been studying German.. from the Army newspaper that would come out...

Q Anyway you could certainly make yourself understood.

A Yes, we had more one-liners there than... ^{hands - up} ^{put down your machine guns} I would memorize those phrases and keep them in my watch pocket...there was nothing ^{else to do} I could use. I learned a kind of

A a kind of pigeon German ^{So I told them to come out} ~~with their hands up.~~ I think there were about three ~~and they warned of prison guards~~ ~~of trousers and~~ ~~they came~~ ^{very cautiously} ~~and three~~ men, as I recall ~~I think there were about three who came out,~~ and they wore the prisoner garb, I was ~~frightened at first~~ ^{shipped}, trousers, and they came out and stood in front of the building. I motioned for them to come, and they obviously ~~thought~~ and were afraid, and they came closer to me, and they stood about 10 or 15 feet away but I just would not go up closer to them. As an ^{old pro} soldier, I was not moving up to them...or they would move to me. I wanted them to come closer to me - to see if there were any weapons, etc, and it was very open space and I didn't ^{want to} get out too far in the open space. So they came closer to me ^{I asked if there were any soldiers around} ~~and if there were~~ and they said they didn't know. And I said ^{are there any soldiers} soldiers in the building ~~- at least~~ ^{+ they said, no.} and then they asked me if I were Russian. I said no I was American. And they ^{just melted.} ~~said no...~~ And they shouted..... and they were ^{or} Poles ~~also~~ Eastern Europeans, they were as a group, I think they were entirely Slavic, and they shouted and a couple of more men came out, and then immediately there was an ^{bottle of wine that I had} outpouring of men women and children coming out, and I passed out my ~~meanwhile,~~ my friend, I had signaled for him to come out, it was okay. And the men grabbed me and put me up on their shoulders and started carrying me around. I was passing out cigars and I gave them the bottles of wine, and some of them got sick from it, and I felt like ^{their hero} ~~they should go for~~ it... for three minutes. Then I tried to explain to them what had happened: very briefly in my ^{pigeon} ~~pigeon~~ German.

Q None of them spoke English?

A No, none of them spoke English. All of them spoke a little bit of German, and I then told them that they were free and that they could ~~look~~ ^{go}. And one of them... I ^{he} guess the first man that got up to talk to me, apparently a leader of them, ~~I~~ asked me how did I know there were no more Germans around, and I said I didn't know. And he said ~~I~~ he didn't think that they should leave - they would get into trouble if they left. So I told him that yes, ^{if} ~~they shouldn't~~ ^{didn't want to} take the risk, I really couldn't guarantee because I wasn't going to hang around, but they could wait there, but since there was a road there, I was sure there would be some trucks and traffic, and they shouldn't be afraid, that the odds were that they would be American trucks ^{just} ~~in traffic~~.

A but that any rate, if they waited for the rest of the day, and if it was quiet, then the war was over ^{As far as that was} ~~concerned~~ I doubted if the rest of the day _____ but they refused to leave .

Q They were that afraid?

A Yes, they were starved and haggard...

Q This was not your first experience with prisoners from a camp, was it? You had ... you had... it was the third? But you, you knew pretty much what to expect ? You were not that shocked, were you?

A No, I wasn't stocked with this group, and also I was very impatient at that time because I was torn between ^{the} ~~I~~ need ~~I~~ felt to get back to my company. I could hear gunfire a couple of miles away, and felt it was my company, and I didn't want them to think I had had ^{dalliance} ~~fled~~ ^{flagged}, that I had generally gotten lost, and this was almost a ~~sallying~~.../ and they didn't really care about my-adventure in opening the gate ... they would be more ~~xxx~~ interested in my help down there ... our company was supposed to have 200 men, and probably there were only 150 left, so I felt very guilty that I had to get back. I wasn't eager to get back, but I felt I had to get back, so that I was torn between this ~~and~~ which was almost a dalliance with my responsibilities ^{I had to my} ~~company~~ but I saw that they were all free, that the gate was open. I had... nothing to give them...cigar and all, and I couldn't help anyone.

Q You brought them the news.

A I brought them the news, and it was a lot of fun for a few minutes, carrying around ^{on} ~~their~~ shoulders ...

Q It must have been a great ^{for} feelings from your part and for them too.

A Yes, I would say it was something I had to do, and I was very glad that I had the opportunity to do ~~it~~ open that gatebut I guess also that this was not an extermination camp, the place was not literally ^{ed with bodies} ~~ed~~ if there were dead there, they would have been right there in the barracks, dying in their sleep ...

Q This was a work camp. And ?

A This was a work camp.....

A ---

Q Can we put the name?

A I don't know the name....but I can locate it on the map for you.

Q So that we can put it into the record. It is between ^{Lampertheim}Landfortheim-(spelling) and Höttenfeld (spelling) and the east side of the Rhine River and east of Worms. About the same _____

Q You get into the foothills here.

Q And west of ^{Gulzbach}Zutzbach (spelling?) which is a ^{known}non-place. So, this was your third experience, was it? Your experience where you...?

A This is the experience that I remember very well. It is ^{indelible}_____ in my mind.

Q You probably had those fears all over again ..

A Yes. But the first one.... this one, the Division history. This must be the place, I always know it as Chermak (spelling?). The ^{Nazweiler}concentration camp, and the barracks ^{are very similar to the ones}_____ were described, but I associate in my mind with ~~XXXXXXXX~~ a town of Chermak that we captured, and I guess I don't have a map....

Q Well, an exact map will probably show it.

A Just outside of Chermak... and that was the night that we got there.

Q That was the first experience you had?

A Yes, but I saw very little of it, because what happened was that we just went by it. and they had fled... the SS guards. But we still attacking that area, so it was a matter of going by it, some of the people not in my I was then in the Squad a small group of men, and we were forward _____ and others went back to liberate it.

Q Were you told anything about these camps ^{were}when you ^{prepared}... I mean you didn't see anything inside this particular first camp?

A No.

Q But the people. ^{who did}

A But I knew it was a concentration camp, I knew it was being liberated.

Q Yes. So, you didn't go inside. But some of your buddies did. Were they, or you, given any information , any instructions on what they are going to find, or what they should do, or how they should act...?

A No, I don't recall any instruction. I think I was aware. I was politically active and was very much anti-Nazi, I came from a family that was politically-oriented, and so I think at that time I was - I knew I was aware of it - the German concentration camps and... the magnitude of the extermination camps did not hit me, though, until the last week of the war when I ended up in Salzburg, Austria.

Q When you were in this particular camp, near Chermak, you didn't see it, did you hear anything that your buddies reported? It was also a work camp...

A Not from my immediate companies. I would not have had an opportunity ... I don't recall talking to anyone.... I remember that in our Regiment we had everyday a zerox one-sheet that came out with news of the war and it also included a very-guarded language happening on our front. As I recall they may have had one-line about liberating this camp. I don't recall any writing, there may have been, but I don't recall.

Q So you didn't see much or hear anything?

A Even though I was physically involved, frankly I was much more concerned at that time for survival... I was a scout going down on the road, we were machine gunned, and ambushed, people right around us were killed or wounded, the temperature must have been in the high 30s, and I stayed in a ditch of water for hours. happen to me today I would die I remember terribly I guess it would have to apparently to survive and/being told and frightened that when I got back, I was isolated, ... because... What happened was that they thought I was killed. I was afraid when I got back my own officers until would shoot me because they would see someone moving in the dark, and I was afraid to yell, because I didn't know where the Germans were, and I managed to get back and someone yelled --- I was a yell-but just yelled --- who's there or halt or something and became the rest of that town coming back, so I got back as I recall then, we went around the other side of Chermak and that's where we found the concentration camp. Then we went on.... I was too busy fighting...

Q So you didn't actually see the concentration camp?

And you didn't hear any reports, any personal reports?

A No, I don't remember talking to anyone about it. I remember know what would be there, knowing that it was the kind of camp where people were treated brutally, and I knew that much, but that was from my own reading. I don't think there was much I got from the Army.

Q So what was your second experience?

A Second experience was my outfit became part of the French Army and
when we got to were a task force and we broke through, Strassburg, then we
went south of Strassburg, there was very little fighting left then. It was Thanks-
giving Day, I think then, 1944, the end of the month, and ~~I~~ we were just ~~celebrating~~
celebrating, there weren't that many of us, just 20 or 30 of us, there weren't that
many of us, and we were in trucks, and we just drove down and then if we ran into
opposition, we would just hop out of the trucks and drove into this town. And
there was a huge factory making locomotives, and a very modern factory. And
inside we discovered there was a labor camp again, and with barracks-arrangements, and
there were sleep-in arrangements of bunk beds, maybe a layer of four or five, well
maybe....

Q Not much head room?

A Maybe a foot and half, and mats or no-mats. People again were mostly Eastern Europeans
I don't think there were any children. Men and women and I remember they showed me a
trough, that they were fed in a trough, and I remember there being a lot of vermin, and ~~they~~
really
physically there were ~~they~~ very run down physically, starved, I don't think there were
prison guards there, ~~there~~ they said there was a mixture, I think some of them wore very
old raggedy clothes, and we arrived there and apparently they had already had word that
the Germans had been defeated, because they were milling about the factory, kind of
waiting for someone to come when we told them they were free. As I recall I suggested
that they might stay there for a little while, because we were part of the French would
come and get them also. We were working with the Alsacian Regiment, the French Army,
that turned out to be Andre Malraux's regiment, except that we knew him as Col. Burger
which is nomme de guerre and so we knew that some of them had been in the area, so we told
them they ought to wait for the French, and it was their area.

Q So this was your first contact, you know eye to eye?

How did you feel when you saw these raggedy human beings? I mean reading is one thing
and coming face to face?

A It was not unexpected....for me, it was not.

Q Did you identify with...?

A I thought they were lucky that the Germans didn't kill them, ~~and~~ when they retreated.

Q Was there any thought of how can human beings be like this?

A Well, I knew what the German, the NAZI government was like, no surprise to me. I
nothing came as a surprise as ~~you are telling me~~ ^{*The brutality*} of German government - something that
I already knew and understood. I think that my correct in that my memory of it was
I felt a sense of relief because I felt that the Germans in retreat could probably kill
people ^{*who forced labor prisoners and in concentration camps.*} ~~in prison...~~

Q Did you think of them as peers - human beings?

A Sure.

Q Or did you think of them as creatures, those poor creatures? And ^{*what was the*} ~~identification~~ ^{*idea?*}

A No, that's not like me. I felt compassion for them, but well, they certainly were
people. It's hard in a short period of time to differentiate in this camp; I had
a chat to chance on who they were, because again in my case we went through, ^{*liberated*}
wandered through the factory to see if there were any arms there or German left...

Q And there were no German guards?

A No Germans, no guards, they had all fled... Oh, I guess that's why my memory was that
they knew that the war was over, because then the Germans had left.

Q Did you get any instructions from your superior officers on how to treat them?

A No, nothing....first of all we had.... this was an Infantry combat... the officers
outfit
like this, in our ~~officers~~... Our Division has ~~x~~ the highest number of casualties
... we had more than 500% turnover... ^{*wean margins*} so that the officers did not
they were very much ^{*close to the German Red Army in appearance*} and no one told us what to do or gave us
instructions.

Q So the officers didn't have any instructions from higher-ups either?

A No, ~~x~~ I would think not. I am positive they did not.

Q So they just let you go through this...?

A We did what we felt like doing....

Q And in this particular case, you were fairly sure that the French Army would take

Q care of the people and feed them and

A I don't know whether the French Army could feed them, but I know the French Army had trouble feeding themselves. We were merely living off the land at that time, we were ahead of our supplies, and we were just going from house to ^{help ourselves} house - to see if they had food, and living on the rations, so we ourselves were just managing, not short on food, just instructions on what to do...

Q No medical help?

A Remember when we went across Alsace, we were ^{with fast force and} broke through, immediately refugees sprung from everywhere... ^{people from every} that part of the world suddenly spring out of nowhere, and start walking toward the rear ^{had good labor} there were many farms ^{living with them.}

Q You were used to the image of emaciated...?

A people who would be liberated were emaciated. Some of them lived on farms quite well. We ran into ... in an area we ran into, a couple of fellows who had been in our Regiment, not my company, but I was with them when they got captured... I just left them and they ran into German ^{patrol} and were captured. Some months later when we ran into them in Bavaria, they were on a farm. They had been liberated by their own outfit. And you know they were well-fed, rosy cheeks, had a great time, in love with the farmer's daughter, protective of the German farmers. the experience of some of them was not that bad, but ~~what~~ we were used to refugees who suffered, but popping up out of nowhere, had escaped from something and were hiding, then would materialize as soon as they saw American soldiers.

Q So you were used to that already? How did that affect you? Did you have nightmares or any serious, series of thoughts of general philosophical approach or personal approach? Did this in any way change your way of life, your thinking, or your plans for your future of these...?

A Well, that's a big order.

Q I mean can you pinpoint...?

A I think the _____ of the horrors.... let me finish it up by telling about Dachau briefly because it is very limited...

Q Oh, I forgot...

A I came there either the day of liberation or the next day, because I remember being in a jeep and we had to go out of our way and I had heard about Dachau. I didn't know the name of the place, and we had come through that area, and we had come through across the Danube and liberated Ohmsberg (spelling?), and were heading toward Munich, and ... but we skirted around, so we drove out of the way to see it. But my memory is fuzzy on that. And I ~~xi~~ don't think I stayed there very long, because I remember seeing a siding ... a ^{road} ~~wall~~ siding... it may have been ~~a~~ rail siding... with bodies stacked, and I didn't want to see anymore. ...Here I was - took time out from my outfit again _____ (unintelligible) and I felt that I didn't want to be a tourist and stare at it, and there was no useful for me to do there. The people already there...

Q The inmates were still there .. in the camps?

A Oh yes, still there, but people were leaving, and then we kept running into inmates from that and other camps... I don't know what the camps were between Munich and Salzburg. In fact, we ^{a week} before the war ended - I was in a village we captured at the Austrian border. We hadn't gotten to Austria, and by this time prisoners of German prisons were coming out ^{of the Alps} ~~opposite~~... from Yugoslavia coming through the Alps through Southern Germany, and we had a big farm area - which area was bigger than ^{a patio} but internal ^{barn} area. ^{We could put} maybe a thousand German prisoners were there, and I remember finding about 5 or 6 Jewish refugees from - I think - from Dachau. With the prisoner uniform on, and they were very emaciated, in fact one was.... not from a concentration camp - but had been with the German military organization, ^{as a tailor} - and they were from Vienna.

Q That was your first encounter with Jewish...uh...

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Q to your knowledge?

A Occasionally there were Jewish survivors, ^{in some of} but the labor camps got mixed in with Poles who identified themselves as Poles and survived, but these were very Jewish. And in fact ^{one of them} spoke Yiddish and several of them spoke Yiddish, and we talked, and I asked them what they needed. I thought I could get them a car.... German Army collapsed.... there were cars there, and they said no, they couldn't get gas, and they were afraid to drive the car - presumptuous to get out of a concentration camp and get a car, and they just didn't want it, and one of them said he could drive a car, but what they wanted was a bicycle. Many of the German troops had bicycles ... reconnaissance troops and so I got them a couple of bicycles, I got them all bicycles and they were barefoot, so I just went in there ^{to the compound with the Germans} I looked around and got shoes....
unintelligible....
shoes....

Q Where? In the store?

A In the compound... ^{we just} captured ^{that house} ... and I would take time... order them to take their shoes off..

Q So that you ... you had contact with German soldiers? At that point?

A ^{During} Yes, I had contact with German soldiers....

Q In that camp....in the house? ^{Dachau.}

A ^{No, this is not Dachau. This is in a village}village south of Dachau.

Q Oh I thought this was..

A This was in a village ^{refugees} coming out of Dachau, just walking..

Q I see, I see. I thought ^{we were talking about Dachau.}

A ~~This was about two or three days later.~~

Q I thought... so this is outside of..?

A Outside of Dachau.

Q In the open.

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A clothes that and I got them shoes and ~~things when~~ I took them off the German prisoners...they were very unhappy, really, especially they got insulted when I took their shoes for the concentration camp.

Q And you cared a lot, huh? ~~Isn't that silly?~~

A I enjoyed that experience... shirts and trousers, etc.

Q And also having the power to do it...

A The concentration camp people were afraid of wearing uniforms. They didn't want to wear the uniforms.

Q The uniforms of ?

A Germany. *I don't think it was hatred of the Germans, I think* ~~Part of~~ it was fear just that they might be mistaken.... I don't know what it was. But they did not want their clothes, they wanted the shoes.

Q There had been disgust or fear, you know. Which the next American could have misunderstood. Now ~~what~~ *Dachau itself?* what about ~~the houses~~ the houses?

A All I saw was ~~gardens~~ *bodies* torn up, and I don't remember anything else. I don't think I ever entered a place.... I think ~~this thing about~~ *just seeing the bodies was enough* ~~I didn't want~~ *I didn't want to look at the place* to see it.

Q Did you share the experiences and feelings with anybody about that? At that time? Either within your...?

A I told guys I was with about it, what I had seen ... seeing bodies all over, and people ~~starved~~ *starved* ~~still alive~~, etc...

Q How did they react?

A I don't think I got any reaction...

Q No reaction?

A Well, we were combat outfit, everybody was trying to kill us, and we were glad to be surviving, we were all thinking of ourselves...

Q Oh, I understand that perfectly.

A I don't remember having any ...oh philosophical conversations with anyone.

There was no one in my outfit with whom I could have a philosophical conversation...

A like that friend was ahill-billy friend...had lot of innate brightness but no education,
_____ Strassburg _____ I said I thought it was very beautiful
scenery, cathedral and all that - statutes etc, and I would like to be able to see that.
He said - hey _____ they write books about clocks? So I said - yeah, you
write books about everything, you write books about cities - -

Q You have other things in common at that point...

A But I don't recall having discussed - philosophical discussions . We did have - the last
week that we (it must have been May sometime, maybe in June). And Salzburg ^{was} ~~won~~ the
American Occupation of the government or something, put up an exhibit of photographs.
Like lovely little streets and alleys, with lovely shops they had a stone front and they put
in photographs of Dachau and that had more of an effect on me than actually seeing
the bodies... I don't know why, but I think my experiences up to then, the labor
camps, and the dead and Dachau were almost all isolated pinpoints _____

I think when I saw the photographs I ... maybe 100 photographs - the magnitude of it
... hit me

Q It was probably a time when you had.... when you could stop worrying about your own
safety..

A Right, because the war was over.

Q You were in Salzburg and
and _____ it was quiet.

A It was over within a week. Salzburg Festival Orchestra gave a concert, chamber music I
remember...

Q And then it really hit you.

A But the magnitude of it... that really had a greater impact ...

than the actual ...because the actual event was so quick and my reaction was so
spontaneous about it, I could see it.

Q And you did what you could for the people, and then you didn't want to think about it.
Your idea..

A _____ in other camps I did what I could and then was gone.

Q Now did you write home? Did you correspond with anybody at home?

With whom you shared these?

A No, I didn't... I never told my parents. I ^{never} told my parents I was in combat, told them that a rear echelon job that was _____ and they told me later that they assumed that I was in combat, but they were never sure, they never knew. I just ^{never wrote} _____ about what I was ...

Q So you never really shared this with anybody?

A Well, after the war when I got home... *I did*

Q What happened then? Were you then.... did you really share it fully with your family? With your friends?

A I told whoever would listen ... _____ (unintelligible) ... I told stories about my experiences, especially the one of liberating that camp all by myself. I remember telling my kids the story of the day when I told my daughter.... _____
Or when I talked to my daughter today at lunch today...

Q _____

A ~~They will~~ ... *in audible*

Q They will ask you many many times....

A Yes, I did share them with people ...

Q Like what?

A Yes, I did talk to them.

Q What was the feeling behind it, besides the relief, when you were able to share it, and of course pride in certain instances, etc, do you have the feeling that you want people to know what happened...? To this ^{is part of our} ~~private~~ horror history that ~~you~~ should be taught as a deterrent ... How do you feel about this?

A Well, I was at that time fairly active in organizations. I was just coming back, I remember feeling that I wanted to be active in Jewish organizations, I am not at all religious, but I joined the American Jewish Congress, which was then involved in gathering information on genocide. I think _____ the publication - when the Black Book ~~is~~ that came out, 1948 or 49 trying to document....

Q I don't know about that. It's called the Black Book?

A The Black Book _____ I think it was the American Jewish Congress that put it out, and all the effort to document _____ I think it was in the late 40s.

Q Did it change your attitude towards religion or towards being Jewish? Before the War?

A No, it was my own feelings, but I could be Jewish without being religious...and maybe a real force within me being Jewish to maintain a Jewish identity....Which is not easy and my wife (my ex-wife) my present wife is not Jewish, the kids see themselves as being both Jewish and Irish. I have tried to give them some understanding ...but I think it should be their sense of responsibility _____

Q How do you feel about teaching the Holocaust ... in Schools of Religion ? Why type of schools should this be taught.?

A I think this should be taught as part of history... a very significant part of history. I think it is a phenomena of great magnitude ... I think it is so great, I don't see how it can be avoided in the teaching of history of what has happened. To me, it is a significant difference from warfare in the past, and such a rare phenomena, the killing of _____ single out... the religious social institution - systematically to exterminate people. While at the same time enslaving people. In military terms of barracks and forced labor, seven days a week as I recall maybe 14 hours a day. If they didn't heal well, you should be killed, and that sort of thing. _____ possibility...
a religious

Q Now that I gather you are not ~~an~~ EXXIXIXX person. You were not, and at that time, and it did not change you any way.

A Right.

Q Were there any thoughts of religion in your mind at the time when you saw either the pictures of Dachau or the actual ? Did you see it at all in any conscious religious thoughts... How could God permit this, or is there a God? Or anything like that?

Q No, I didn't. Can't say that I saw it in religious terms at all. I saw it in terms ^{society} ... what someone will do set out to eliminate Jews and he did what he said he was going to do. I had read Mein Kampf...

Q in their survival, do you think that some of them did survive because of religious beliefs?

A No, I think

Q did survive because of religious beliefs...

A No, I think people survived if they had strong beliefs about *a variety* things like strong identity ... of themselves, strong feelings of survival and again strong political convictions. I think a person who was ideological - a Communist for example - he had a better chance of survival than someone who had no political feelings, or someone *who is a Zionist or a Jew trying to think of some of the groups* *a socialist among the Jews at that time* I am thinking of some of the groups among the Jews who *strong feelings of*

Q *like ?*

A ...certain religious feelings that are very strong... could just as well have been social ... deep feelings.

Q I ... what you are describing is people who have something else to live for, other than their own bodies.

A Right.

Q And whether that was communism - ideological or political - they were religious beliefs. Either way that would help them survive. That would give them the strength.

A Yes, I would think so. If you had been a prisoner, what would have helped you survive? This belief?

Q No, I don't feel that religious ...but I think I ~~was~~ have a strong sense of responsibility... *to others* even an occupation *where I could do that* arbitrary....politically conscious and active.

Q You have very strong political opinions, *and views?* don't you?

A Yeah, not in terms.... I guess in terms

Q Uh huh, do you think that you wartime experiences changed these or helped them grow ...?

A No, they were pretty well in place when I was a kid. I think they were reinforced.

Q So that just helped reinforce the direction in which you were going anyway?

A Its the *of a Zionist* that has made me more *and willing* and it has also made me highly intolerant of people with ideologies who feel they have the final answer to the solution *I got very taken - a -* for the justice of the solution. *getting a kick in the back* *Marvelous people, but very active with the I R A...*

(unintelligible...)

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William Weinberg

A..... our time drinking.... this came up and this guy said something about his contact with the Red Brigade. I obviously bridled because _____ shut him up. Sometimes I think I will hit him over the head with a chair...

Q They have strong feelings..

A Yeah, because the use of the ideology to impose life or death on people just based on one ideology whether it's Nazi or Red Brigade or ILA I find deplorable..

Q How about the civil rights ^{Movement} group? Viet Nam War? How, where...

A Well, my emotions were mixed in the Viet Nam War ... still are ... and there is much concern with what's been happening in Indo-China since we left. Greater number of casualties _____ during the war years. ... turned the Civil rights movement fairly active ... When I was an Administrator a few years ago, I was in the president's office ... and I had a legal opportunity ^{for the University} _____ at that time, I was active with the Poverty Program, I was active on the executive board _____

I did that for 22 years. Now I don't feel it so much now - -
Middle East

Q How about /... How do you feel about what's going on now...? After all Israel has quite an aggressive policy too?

A Well, I am not... I don't have a warm regard for Begin...but I think that Israel's aggressive ~~XXXXXX~~ policies make some good sense....

Q And it is justified?

A By itself, yes, I think ... the ^{Arab} ~~Iran~~ countries certainly made some statements that they want to work out a peaceful solution, _____ until they do I don't think

Q Did you ever go to Israel? Israel has made a choice.

A Never been there, and I would love to. In fact, my wife and I are trying to work out a deal whereby ...we...she turned down a couple of _____ go to the Middle East if we can. Somewhere we can ~~xxxx~~ travel through. I feel strongly ... I remember years ago during one of the _____ (unintelligible...) when my wife at that time _____

Q like you still have a strong anti Nazi and anti-dictatorship. I have a feeling

during the war.

A ... I guess _____ killing and death I saw ... it's a hell of a place to be.

Q Did you see the Holocaust as primarily a Jewish problem, or a human problem?

A I think I saw it as both...certainly the magnitude of the extermination of the Jews

... that was a Jewish problem. But I ran into Eastern Europeans *... who were not exterminated*
but who _____ died - worked to death, died of typhus, and they would not have died other than
they died _____ by the Nazis.

Q And you had to come back to Germany or to France

A No, but I would like to.... I figure I have traveled all over the U S - Canada, I have
been in all the states .. up to Canada several times, but I have only been back to Europe
once _____ but I would like to ^{go back to Alsace} / _____ very warm regard for that area .. not so
much the people, but the area, it was history. And how the French Army recaptured these
little villages... I would like to see it.

Q I have a feeling you would like to go back..

A I am not sure I want to go back to Germany. I'd love to see the Alps.

.....I just bought a Volkswagon this year... after

Q Changed its name? Do you feel a need to do anything now, or you actively doing anything

* now that you feel will contribute to the kind of a future that would not permit this
.....?

A Well, I have - most of my life

(unintelligible)

Q I am bringing up the children...

from them

A Well, I have been separated for years, I re-married and the kids are now living
_____ have established a relationship with them...

Q That's one way of making sure what happens in the future.

And having children who have both religions _____ did they go to any religious school
or did they?

A No, when _____ they went to the Reform Temple...When my ex-wife had mental problems
m.... more than I can handle... _____ I didn't really have a choice, but
my oldest daughter is probably the most *Jewish* a previous marriage...

Q Who...

A Irish and Italian, but _____
(unintelligible...)

Q So that is something.... to identify themselves in a national way....

Athey see themselves as Jewish ... goes back and forth between the various grandparents .

Q I asked the question whether Dr. Weinberg's sought any counseling or any therapy that he may have needed as the result of his experiences...

A I think that you had asked me earlier about the impact of these experiences on my psyche, and it seems to me that the greatest impact was the combat experience of being shot at and being in an outfit that casualties were great and your companions were constantly disappearing by being killed. That was much more traumatic in terms of nightmares or ~~XXXXX~~ nervousness which has never left me. Just so... a month ago we went camping, and I had never been to the Gettysburg Battlefield. And one... and I read about it, studied it, and when I got there and walked the battlefield, I got combat nervousness back, and ~~it~~ kind of cautioned - knowing that rationally knowing that there is no danger of feeling tension about it. The concentration ~~XXXXX~~ ^{camp} experience has less of an impact on me. It was a greater impact emotionally, ~~XXXXX~~ intellectually... the enormity of the whole thing. It had a greater impact, but by that time I had ... by the time I had seen it... I had seen lots of dead bodies and had been involved in lots of combat, and it didn 't scar as much as a personal experience, as my experience as a combat infantryman, which day after day people were trying to kill me.

Q Well, your danger... the danger to yourself, but what about the you being asked to kill somebody?

A Well, I accepted that. I was an Anti-Nazi. I enlisted in the Army, I wasn't drafted, and I assumed ^{that's} why I was there. I didn't like it. I was raised as a Pacifist, and ^{would not} my father and mother/let me play with things that had to do with the war, the killing. It was difficult for me, but I assumed that was why I was there.

Q This kind of living ... being shot at and being in danger all the time this is something that you are still carrying with you now?

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William Weinberg

A Yeah. When I have times of anxiety that have nothing to do with war or ^{social} ~~war~~, I still have anxiety about things... Occasionally some of my combat experiences...

Q ..._____?

A Well, it's not disabling, but.... something that just happens.

And the thing that was even greater ... ^{what} so I saw ^{at Dachau} was almost an exercise in almost an academic exercise ... I don't know why, it didn't come as a surprise to me. I felt ^{horrified} by it, and I couldn't look at it, but it was no surprise, I was ... I knew this is what the Nazis were doing. I was kind of prepared for that, but I don't think that anyone ever gets prepared for getting shot at.

Q Well, thank you very much.

Transcribed
11/5/81 R.Scheinberg