

OK, so--

Wait, wait. We need that signal.

Oh, I didn't know.

Go ahead.

Obie, is there anything else you'd like to say about the Nuremberg trials before we move on? Any other last impressions that you think it's important for us to know about?

Not really. I think we've pretty well covered Nuremberg.

OK, so after Nuremberg, you're still in Europe for a little while. The scope of the genocide is becoming clearer and clearer. You've attended the trial, or at least one day of the trial. And I'd like to ask you about-- go back into the army, and how many-- you said before Jewish soldiers were kind of alone or hadn't found one another.

Was there anything that brought you together? Did you attend services after the war was over? Did you have any other kinds of experiences of community, still while in Europe?

Yes and no. The question is, did I have a feeling of community with other Jewish soldiers while I was in Europe? And the answer is yes.

I went to services almost always when I was anywhere they had services. And when I was in Verdun, I found the synagogue. And it was part of a-- somebody had organized a group of soldiers to help clean the place up. And we did.

But there were always soldiers in some other unit I saw them on, whenever we went there, on Saturday or Sunday, and helped. I got to know rabbis. I took a furlough-- not a furlough, a one-day pass to Luxembourg, which I would not have been allowed ordinarily. But in the course of cleaning the synagogue, I had gotten to know the rabbi who put it together.

And he was going to Luxembourg City, which was kind of a city that was relatively untouched by the war and not far from Verdun. And he invited me to go with him. And I got appropriate passes.

And in Frankfurt, they held a soldier's service and I went to it. But because of the way-- in Paris, I went to the Rothschild Synagogue and went to other synagogues. And the way the army is structured, you go back to your unit.

It's not like being a civilian, you can drive away and meet them tomorrow night and have a drink. I had no transportation without making a lot of arrangements. And so the answer is, I was aware there was a Jewish community.

When I was on the troop ship coming to Europe, we did have a service and there were two Jewish soldiers in my unit, at least two. And we had become friends, and there was a kind of rapport between, again, two or three soldiers in the same unit.

From there on I have no recollection of having any close relationship. When I was on the pumping station, there were no Jews. And everything else was kind of transient. You were going to be-- so the answer is, yes, I made a conscious effort to associate with Jewish events and Jewish things. And I never had any warm feeling about it at all, because nobody-- it wasn't possible.

Yeah, but I recall reading in one of your letters home that you did attend services where a rabbi was--

This is in the United States. The question is, didn't I have a rather important experience with a rabbi involving the entire Jewish community during my army service? The answer is yes, and quite important, and quite interesting in the light of the way the world has developed, but it was in the United States. And again, it was personal rather than communal.

When I was a soldier stationed at College of William and Mary, they had a joint Jewish service on Sundays, when people could possibly get off, including nearby Camp Perry, which was a Navy Seabee camp, and Fort Eustis, which was an Army camp, and the soldiers at William and Mary, and maybe some other units. And the Jewish community of Newport News and Williamsburg got together and had some special food for us on Sunday. And there was a short service with a local chaplain. There was always a Jewish chaplain at one of these facilities.

As a matter of fact, at William and Mary, they had the Naval Chaplain School, where they train Jewish chaplains to give extreme unction to Catholic soldiers and the reverse. And I went to one of the services, and the chaplain delivered a very pro-Zionist sermon, which doesn't sound particularly unusual now but was unusual then. And he talked about the rich German Jews were traitors to all Jews, and they didn't really support the Zionist movement. And as I wrote to my parents in the beginning of what I'm going to tell now, I said, "I assume he's talking about us."

And at that time from 1938 till sometime after the war, there existed in the United States a very aggressive and important organization called the American Council for Judaism, which was an anti-Zionist organization. A book has recently been written about called Jews Against Zionism. And it was based, basically, on the thesis that Israel was a political movement, and not a-- there was no case of Israel, but the independence of Palestine was a political movement and had virtually nothing to do with Jews.

I was brought up in this movement. The rabbi at congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, which I was a member and my family's very active, was one of its leaders. And its president was a Philadelphian named Lessing Rosenwald who was a friend of my father's.

And so I knew a great deal about this, and resented this rabbi who talked about my friends and people I thought like myself as a Jewish Lindberghs and Jewish quislings. Quisling, you may remember, was the Prime Minister of Norway who became a collaborator with the Nazis and presided over the fall in Norway. So I wrote home about this, that I was so offended by this sermon.

And my parents showed it to Rabbi Lewis Wolsey, who was the religious leader of Rodeph Shalom, where I had been both barmitzvahed and confirmed, and who was the then, I think, the Treasurer of the American Council for Judaism, but if not, an officer. And he was terribly offended by this. And the speech was made, the sermon-- and he said this breached the rules of the Jewish chaplaincy, that Jewish chaplains were to administer, just as they were to be trained to administer extreme function to Catholics who were wounded and were dying in battle, they were not supposed to deal with controversial issues.

They were to minister to all Jews. And he felt this was breaching their chaplain oath. So-- and he proceeded to write to the head of the Jewish Chaplain Corps saying that-- and the speech gets a little more complicated and political.

The naval captain lieutenant, I guess, who made this sermon was a man named Joseph Shoubow, S-H-O-U-B-O-W. And Joseph Shoubow was a rabble-rousing Boston rabbi who was very much involved with the Zionist movement and some radical aspects of it. And he had broken up a World Zionist Conference in '38 or '39 with some efforts, because he was a rabble-rouser within the Zionist Movement.

So he made this speech not having any idea I was in there. I was a private. I just happened to be there, but that's the way he was.

So Rabbi Wolsey wrote a letter objecting that Shoubow-- at this time I'm going to interrupt myself and explain. Wolsey recognized who Shoubow was, that he had a target who was a rabble-rouser, and a Zionist, and aggressive. And I guess Shoubow recognized that he had a worthy opponent in Wolsey, and I'm a poor private in the middle of it all.

So Wolsey wrote a letter to a prominent New York rabbi, who was Chairman of the Chaplain's Advisory Committee or whatever the official thing is that reviewed Jewish chaplains, and their credentials, and their conduct, and the like. His name was David de Sola Pool, and he was the head of the-- he was the rabbi of, I think, Shearith Israel, the old Sephardic congregation in New York. So de Sola Pool has to take this seriously on accounts of Lewis Wolsey. It

involves Joseph Shoubow.

And Wolsey starts a movement to have de Sola Pool review this and have Shoubow thrown out of the chaplaincy. And suddenly initially, I'm an 18-year-old, probably-- maybe 19, but no older-- and I suddenly realized I'm in the middle of a fight. And I'd really like to go to services the rest of my army career. And I don't want-- I didn't want to--

That's not what you wanted to have happen.

I didn't want to cause a fight to begin with. I went and told my parents what I was doing on Sunday morning. And so it went on for a while, but eventually, at the last minute, I withdrew from it. I refused to sign the affidavits, although the facts were correct, to start the motion to have Rabbi Shoubow dismissed from the chaplaincy.

And then-- but Rabbi Wolsey and his picked up on this, and decided I would be a great fellow to have in the American Council of Judaism when the war was over. I felt strongly. I wrote good letters, and I came from a prominent family.

And so they coddled me. And for the next, probably as long as I was in the army, the Executive Secretary of the American Council for Judaism, a man named Burger, I think. I think his name was Burger, but at any rate, he wrote to me weekly.

And I did-- first few months, I probably responded to it, and after a while, I again got a little nervous about-- I wanted to go on, when they had a Jewish service. And I wanted the rabbi to think I was a respectable sort of a private, and not a rabble-rouser, and not somebody out to--

To report on him.

Right. And I also began to understand. I have since-- by the time the war was over, I had become a very passionate Zionist.

Well, you see here, that's what I was originally referring to, because you write a letter from Saint-Cloud, France in July '45. And it's to your folks. And you say, "I've just returned from my first visit to the liberal synagogue of Paris, where I hear one of the most brilliant sermons on Zionism or anything else I've ever heard.

It was conducted by the chief Jewish chaplain of the same section. In his sermon, he tried to show a very pessimistic but very true picture of Judaism in Europe. It can never again rise to its former position of prominence and brilliance.

There was logic, which would probably not satisfy a lawyer, but was very convincing in a sermon. He showed how the Jews had to leave Europe and had no place to go but Palestine." And so this is what I was thinking about when I asked you about that letter. So in giving me the background for it--

That's this letter, huh?

Yeah, but you show something that's a real change of point of view.

It's a total-- it's a total change. When I met Rabbi Shoubow, I had been in the army less than nine months, because I left William and Mary nine months after I got in the army. And there are a couple of months in between.

And, well, as I became exposed to the war, exposed to being a Jew, without the firm roots of my home and my family, that I associated it intellectually and otherwise with other Jews. And I wanted them. You ask me how I knew them-- the very fact that I was lonely.

I mean, I described I would go to these events and go home, because there was no way I could be part of this. The army, my army, didn't lend itself to that. If I'd been part of some large division, where they have 10,000 men, there might have been 300 Jewish soldiers.

But in my Engineer battalion, there were 1,000 soldiers, maybe, and maybe 600 or something. And there were a couple of Jews and we were friends. But from there on, I was kind of a-- I never was in a structured unit.

[SNEEZES]

Excuse me. Hold up a minute.

It's OK.

[SNEEZES]

So my Jewish contacts were limited. But all the more, I identified with a broader Jewish community. And I realized the importance of the role of Zionism. And to this day, I feel passionately.

And I have written to a former Secretary of the Army, with whom I have correspondence about these things, describing who raised the question about a recent essay as to whether-- as to the role of Israel in promoting democracy and its failure, maybe, to be a democratic country. And I wrote back, saying that when you ask for my understanding, you should understand that I believe Jews have supported the independence of Palestine from Balfour, from independence and today, to have a haven. And the notion about promoting democracy in the Middle East was the basis on which they got American support. But the support of the Jews is on finding a haven, because for 2,000 years, they've bet on the kindness of their Gentile neighbors, and they'd lost the bet every time.

Very important point.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

So I feel this way. I wrote a letter within the past three weeks. And the conversion came somewhere during the period I was a soldier.

That's--

And I didn't suddenly see a cross in the sky. And I didn't see any number of things like that, but I went in as a product of Louis Wolsey and a product of the Parents of the American Council for Judaism. And I came out passionately a Zionist, and I remain that. But the conversion is--

That was interesting. That was crucial to hear this, and to have it explained. Thank you for doing that.

There it is. And I cared enough to have gotten into the quarrel for Louis Wolsey that-- I'd always cared, but I don't-- this part of my character was formed in the army, was formed by being removed from my roots and all the other things from which I drew strength, and finding I really wanted to be part of a larger Jewish community. And this was part of it. And there it is. And there's reason to believe, I think and you make me think about today, that if I had not been a soldier, and I had gone to Dartmouth College, and I had gotten into the newspaper business, and been successful, and gone to country clubs, and all those things, I might never have changed.

Well, in some ways I was wondering whether I could suggest that-- whether or not the war experience, with all it entailed, was part of what led to this.

Oh, I don't think this is something-- more of a Library of Congress interview, but with almost 70 years hindsight-- 67 or 68, I am quite sure that other than-- well, just the great formative experience of my life other than family, country, has been this army, was being a soldier with all the risk, and all the loneliness, and all the stripping away the veneer. All the veneers I'd lived with, probably live with again, were removed. I was just there.

And I looked not only to Judaism is my religion, because obviously, I wouldn't have gone to services early and I felt as I did as a young man, and I once in my youth thought I wanted to be a rabbi, and really delved pretty deeply into Jewish

things. But that's entirely different than an association with-- being a Zionist, initiating a particular role of Israel in my life. And there it is, as I say. It happened over a three-year period. And I can't exactly define the day, or the week, or the month, but I can tell you I came out different than I went in.

That's OK. That's fine, thank you. Let's go to another identity now, and that is you come back to the States and you go into the newspaper business. Can you get us to the point where you start there, and where you get to be the owner of the "Arlington Sun" and the newspaper "New Jersey," and all of a sudden, as the owner of these papers, you cover the American Nazi Party. So a brief description to bridge this.

I think I can do that fairly quickly, to the American Nazi Party. We'll dwell on that a little. I had-- and again, I don't know exactly-- I always thought I wanted to be in what is now called the "media business," and whether it was newspapers, or book publishing, or magazines. Movies I thought was entertainment in those days, and they were different.

So I had a clear vision, a career vision, probably by the time I got out of the army, certainly when I left college. And I have some literary milestones in my college career to confirm this. And then I became a reporter, initially with the "Long Island Press" in Jamaica, which was, when I worked for them, the largest suburban paper in the world. It's now in the business.

And I was quite successful there. And while I was in my 20s, I was making the top union scale in New York. I was selling the "Saturday Evening Post," "Magazine Digest," all sorts of things on the side.

And I couldn't visualize myself making the money I needed to support the lifestyle I thought I wanted. And maybe there were a few people who identified that as early as I did. At any rate, I did.

And then there were no training programs in the newspaper business, so I eventually got myself a job selling advertising in New Orleans. And for even my employers, they didn't quite understand that, because newspaper advertising salesmen are pretty low on the vocational totem pole. They may be a step ahead of hangmen, but not far.

And so I sold advertising in New Orleans, and several things. One, I married my wife down there. And we will be married 55 years a week from today.

Congratulations.

So that was a very successful venture into New Orleans. And in another book, I comment that her background is about as similar as mine as you can get. And I believe there are a lot of reasons that our marriage has been successful, but I think it's been facilitated by the fact that we had very few social, economic, intellectual hurdles to jump with each other.

We were brought up the same way. We fortunately see the real values in life the same. And she came-- and I mentioned that my grandfather for whom I'm named was a Confederate soldier, and her grandfather on one side settled in New Orleans before the Civil War, and was a cobbler in the Confederate army.

And I found I liked the business of newspapers, and found that frankly, that capitalism is a very creative business. And they're probably more creative than normal, just chronicling of events. And I eventually wanted to become a newspaper publisher and editor.

I wanted to own a newspaper, and I wanted to write for a newspaper and determine its editorial policy. And I've been lucky enough to do that in two markets, and very interesting ones and exciting ones. And one is in Long Branch, New Jersey, which is about 50 miles from New York, and--

What was the name of that paper?

Pardon me?

What was the name of that paper?

"The Long Branch Daily Record." And with a very old Reform Jewish congregation, which was originally the summer branch at Temple Emanu-El in New York, and where I was a trustee, and later, my wife a trustee. And then I published a paper in Arlington, Virginia. And I moved to Arlington in 1971, and began writing a Page One column once a week.

And I continued that for 17 years without missing a week, whether I was sick, away, whatever. And I immediately-- and Arlington-- I didn't know this when I got involved-- was the headquarters of the American Nazi Party. And very shortly after I got involved, and moved, well, long before I moved there, when I was involved in publishing the paper, and I still commuted to New Jersey, the American Nazi Party became very controversial. And I found myself in the middle of that controversy. And--

When did you buy the paper, what year?

1963, in February, 1963. And I had reticence about buying any paper south of the Potomac, because I felt during the best years of my life, I might have a conflict between my conscience and my bankers, since segregation was part of the world. And I understood it was wrong, but I also understood had to pay my bills.

And the "Northern Virginia Sun" was just enough South, was close enough to the Potomac, and our office was less than a mile from the District of Columbia, that I thought I could find a compromise, find a life for myself that didn't involve this conflict. And I no sooner got involved-- and when I say, "no sooner," less than six months-- then I discovered that I was getting irate and difficult letters from the American Jewish Committee, where I was a contributor, and the Anti-Defamation League, where I was on the New Jersey board. I later was on the National Board of Governance of the American Jewish Committee, too-- and very interested, and still am-- and the Ministerial Association.

And the issue can be simply stated, but not simply dealt with. The issue was that the American Jewish Committee's position, the Anti-Defamation League's position, the Arlington Ministerium's position, as well as that of the three major papers in Washington-- the "Washington Post," the "Washington Star," which is now the "Business," and the "Washington Daily News," which was owned by Scripps Howard, but is now out of business also. They all have the same policy concerning the American Nazi Party, which is quarantine.

What is that? What is quarantine?

I'm going to explain quarantine. And the American Nazi-- first of all, the American Nazi Party was located in Arlington. It had a building in what is now the middle of Ballston, where they had a flag with a swastika. And they had a barracks, where several of them lived together. And they had swastikas on the front, and they were quite a factor. And they appeared at every school board meeting and did various things.

Now, the newspapers, as well as the ADL, and the American Jewish Committee, and the Ministerium, and other groups, felt that George Lincoln Rockwell, the commander of the American Nazi Party, really had very few followers-- maybe 50, maybe 100, who knows? And that those who gave him this publicity were aiding and abetting. And therefore, they were quarantining him. I took over the "North Virginia Sun," which previously had followed the quarantine policy-- if not by specific declaration, as I did, implicitly.

Explain for people what does "quarantine" mean?

Quarantine meant that you didn't give him any publicity. You're aiding and abetting. If George Lincoln Rockwell had 50 followers, or 30 followers, or 100 followers, and he was in the paper every week, he would attract more followers. I believed, on the other side, the particular local paper where his activities were known and publicly part of the fabric of the community, that you must expose the antics of a rogue to public scrutiny, and the public will ultimately reject him.

So in other words, if he has a newsworthy event, the other papers didn't publish it, didn't report on it, or minimized the reporting of it.

You asked the question, when he had a newsworthy event-- and I'm going to give you a couple of examples-- they didn't report it and didn't cover it. The answer is absolutely correct. And we did.

That is, he would go to school board meetings regularly, and he would oppose anything that involved integration. Or he would have-- he basically said he wasn't anti-Semitic. He had a very interesting kind of argument.

He was not interested in anti-Semitism. He was basically interested in racial purity. Now, that's almost the same kind of language Hitler used, and therefore, he was a white supremacist by his own definition. And he believed that any intermarriage of racial, or ethnic, or religious corrupted the purity of the line.

And this is an argument that you can make more validly for racehorses, and show dogs, and laboratory rodents than for people. But at any rate, he believed this. And he wrote books about it.

But he appeared at almost every meeting of the Arlington School Board. Sammy Davis, Jr. sang at a nightclub, and as you may know, Sammy Davis, Jr. was a famous entertainer and a friend of Frank Sinatra, black, who converted to Judaism. And they marched in front of that nightclub with a great big dog, a black dog. And it had a card around its neck saying, "I'm black like you, Sammy, but I'm not a Jew." And they did outrageous things.

I believed, then and now, and then it was important for the local paper to cover this. To ignore it, I thought, was wrong. I thought it was helping him, not hurting him.

And so no sooner did I get involved than the American Jewish Committee wrote me a letter, from a man named Fineberg, Andhill Fineberg, who was their special consultant on intercommunity relations. And he was rather threatening to me, that if I didn't follow their policy, he would expose me. I had run several things that they thought were wrong. He would expose me.

And so I wrote back defiantly, and said what I basically said here, that the policy of quarantine might be valid in Houston, or in New Orleans, or Boston, but it wasn't valid in Arlington, Virginia. It was news there. And I thought I want to cover it.

And I answered all these people one by one and made my case. Well, because I was a member of the AJC, I hadn't risen up in its ranks yet, and I was on the board of the ADL, they really didn't think they could quite ignore me. I really wasn't-- so they sent Mr. Fineberg to see me.

And I made a half convert out of Mr. Fineberg. He then wrote a letter to the ADL, and wrote a report to the Jewish Committee saying he disagreed with me, but he had some respect for the position that the local publisher had a different obligation than everybody else in United States, which is about all I could ask. And so I continued.

They then, a man named Ben Bagdikian, who was a leading media critic of his day, wrote a piece for the "Columbia Journalism Review" about the policy of quarantine. And I wrote a response. And the "Columbia Journalism Review" published it in, I think, '66, in which I said what I've said now. But I added to it. And I concluded it that I found George Lincoln Rockwell and his stormtroopers' conduct abhorrent and offensive, but I found it even more abhorrent and more offensive not to cover it.

Well, this is the interesting thing about Ben Bagdikian's piece, which I also read, is that he was also very much opposed to quarantining.

Right, Bagdikian was on my side, basically.

Yeah, he saw it as journalistic slippery ground, that you don't serve your reader. Basically, his point was your reader is your first loyalty.

I agree. And obviously, Bagdikian wrote the article that really favored my position. He attacked them rather than supported them. And I will say that all of the clippings about this, which I kept fastidiously, and the correspondence, I

ended up giving as a collection, and organized as a booklet, to the Archives of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard.

How did that come about?

Because the curator of the Nieman Foundation, and the curator is the same as dean. That's his title there. Bill Kovach, a former head of the Washington Bureau in "The New York Times," I was asked to speak there about the future of newspapers in Eastern Europe.

And before or after my talk, we talked about what I had done in life. And when I told him about this, he just became very enthusiastic, and encouraged me to organize this, and make something that would be lasting. And he thought I'd done something important.

And I subsequently asked, why didn't you give it to a Jewish organization? The answer is that there are two answers. One, Bill Kovach was really interested and encouraged me, and that's one thing.

And two, even the AJC, in which I was very interested, still am, they have a library, but they're not in the library business. Harvard is in the library business. I think I've established, set it up somewhere, where it will serve an important academic, intellectual, educational function indefinitely.

OK, all right. How are we doing, time-wise?

[INAUDIBLE]

We're at 1:10.