

[TONE] This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Anthony Acevedo. OK, we left off with the--

One suggestion that we fix his jacket.

OK, stand by.

Oh OK, stand by. OK, do over. This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Anthony Acevedo. So we left off. You were talking about your diary. And I was asking you what information did you record in your diary in Berga.

I tried to keep my-- as close as possible as the information related to the condition of my fellow men because of the fact that, more or less, I knew that maybe, someday, it would be a valuable thing for us to know that it was important. I was concerned of the condition, knowing that maybe I was at risk carrying that diary because, a couple of times, it dropped out of my pants. I carried it right inside of my belt.

And, on one occasion, one of the guards picked it up, and it happened to be one of the good guards. It was the Austrian fellow that he said, what are you writing? I said just my memoirs of the beautiful country, just faked it to let him know that I wasn't writing anything wrong. And so he believed me. But I tried to keep it as much as secured as possible as I went along, especially, when you would be on the march. And it would drop on you, and then you would lose it.

Did the other-- your fellow American soldiers that you were with, did they know you were keeping the diary?

No, only a couple of them, but no one knew.

When did you find time to write in it?

I'd find time just where I'd sit or whether I'd be in the barracks when we were then. Or, when we were on the march, I tried to, more or less, fake it. Like I'm going to sleep. I'm falling asleep. And, well, everybody would dose off, and no one knew what I was doing.

Why did you keep a secret from your fellow soldiers?

Just to prevent in case I would run in danger of one of them saying something to me.

To you or to the Germans?

To the Germans.

Mhm. And what were the events leading up to the march from the camp?

That march was when the Germans decided that there would be an encounter with all the Allies almost coming together. And so the commander, Merz and Metz, threatened us to the march towards the Bavarian mountains where Hitler lived. And, on the march, I saw-- if any of the other fellows seen also if they noticed-- but I saw that the Germans were carrying umpteen in trucks, umpteen frames of paintings that they had with them towards the mountains, and the treasures that they were stealing from the--

What did the Germans tell you when they decided they were going to evacuate the camp?

That we were leaving. They didn't tell us why, but that we were supposed to leave. That's all. They didn't tell us why.

Do you remember the date, approximately, when this was?

I have it in my diary. I think it happened about around the 9th of April, 9th of April, something like that, 9th or 10th of April. And we finished. The end of the trip was April the 24th-- 23rd, 23rd.

So you were all gathered together and told to leave. And what did the Germans tell you to do? Do you know what direction you walked in?

No, just get out and start marching, walking down the highway. And we passed Hof, a little town of Hof, Germany. We noticed some of our fellows were getting sicker and sicker, and they were dying off.

And so then we were experiencing an attack by our jet fighters against the Germans fired at tanks, German tanks. And so we had to dodge the firing over towards the edge of the highway. Otherwise, we would have been slaughtered by the machine guns.

Did you see other prisoners as you were marching from other camps?

There was a section where we experienced the most awesome thing that we ever saw since we noticed that the Germans had behind us miniature tanks operated by remote control. And, if we intended to escape or do something, they would throw those tanks at us, but they were behind us, guarding us. They were operated by some German. I don't know how they were doing it, but they had an advanced operation.

But, up ahead, we noticed that the Germans were slaughtering political prisoners. We called them political prisoners, but it turned out to be they were Jewish fellows and families, children, mothers, and older fellows. And they were hanging onto the barbed wires as we went along, hanging on the barbed wires because they tried, probably, to escape, go over the fence.

Where was this? On the road on the way to Hof?

On the road to wherever the liberation. And then, still farther up ahead, then we had to pull out of the highway. And I don't know why they made us to make a shortcut or whatever, but we saw a pile of same thing, of women and children, families. They were all slaughtered, murdered. And they weren't just days. They happened instantly ahead of us. They were doing it.

And what were the-- what was the physical condition of yourself and the other Americans? What physical condition were you in?

Oh, we were just almost at the tail end of where we just-- our men were dropping, dropping off the highway out of the lines of the March. Our cart that we pulled and pushed was full of our sick men, and we could barely pull it because of our strength. There was no strength at all with all of us being without food and water.

What did you-- sorry.

And, up ahead, we kept on going, and some were dropping out of the lines. And so we would stop by a barn and rest for a minute or whatever. They would let us rest. The snow started to melt, which was April, part of April, when the snow was getting less and less, but it was still cold.

What did you do at night?

Kept on marching.

Did you march all night?

Kept on marching, sometimes, kept on marching until the Germans told us to pull over and take a break. And were you given any food--

No.

--when you were able to stop?

Until Hof, we went through Hof, and they gave us boiled eggs and spuds, but that was just then. After that we kept on marching again. And some fellows tried to escape and go to other farms just to get away from the lines.

Were they successful?

Some were. Some weren't. They would be caught up, and either they were shot at or were able to escape and get back to the lines.

You said a lot of men died during the death march. What did-- what happened to them? What did you do with them if they--

We couldn't do anything because the Germans wouldn't let us do anything at all. Bury them or whatever, they wouldn't let us do nothing unless we were stationed in one spot. Either they would let us pull them over and leave them right there in the spot. Otherwise, they wouldn't let us do anything to bury them unless we were in a camp, like we were in the barracks.

Right, right. And so do you know how many days you were marching? Do you remember?

Well, from the day of-- that day we left, about April 9th, and we got as far as Cham, Germany, C-H-A-M. And that was on the 24th of April--

And what happened?

--when we were liberated. We wound up in this big barn, and that was the end of it. We got out there, and it was awesome because, when we got in there, we were welcomed by the owners. And they brought us food and all that, but, to sleep, we had to sleep on the slush of the animals. But we were able to eat some of the bread. The bread was a black bread, their good bread.

And then, suddenly, very early in the morning, the German commander-- well, we all heard firing in the distance, thundering. So we heard that there were tanks approaching. And we didn't know whether they were Americans or French or English or whatever or Russians.

But the Germans started to feel the heat, and so they wanted us to follow them. And so they pushed-- they pulled their rifles against us and pointed at us and said either we go with them, or they'll shoot us. That's what they wanted to do.

So, as I yelled back at them and the other medic, we're medics, and we're taking care of these men. And they're dying. One just died-- or two just died just a while ago. So how can we go? They can't walk anymore.

So, before you knew it, they too escaped, and the guards turned in-- gave us their rifles. And they said we'll stay with you. And we started to hear the rumbling getting closer. And then we all started to run towards the highway. And, when we got to the highway, the tanks with the 11th Armored Division liberated us.

Going back just a little bit, when you were on the death march, did you have any sense of what was going on with the war around you, as far as how close the Allies were getting or any news that you were receiving now that you weren't in the camp?

We didn't even know what was going on until we found out that the Americans were making a big sweep. And, when they saw us, they thought that we were enemies and that we were camouflaged. And we didn't have the--

When the 11th Armored Division found you?

The 11th Armored Division saw that. When they saw that we were Americans and we spoke English very well, then they welcomed us. And one of them pulled me like a beet, a string beet, pulled me up on top of the tank. And I just sighed with relief that we were in their hands. And, as we were running towards the tanks, some fellows started to fall dead because of the excitement and because of the weakness.

What was it like to see that white star on that tank, to know that they were Americans?

We were so excited. We cried. We cried. We were so excited that we couldn't say anymore. And, as I was on the top of the tank, one of the fellows said, look, there's a girl with a-- it was a young girl, oh, probably in her 20s. And she had a jug of milk.

And he said, well, let's get that milk for you guys so that you can drink. And he was not aware-- and we felt hungry. And we started drinking it. Well,

Lord behold, it made us sick. My stomach went like this. We weren't far away from the place where the Americans had already established themselves a hospital that they had to pump the milk out.

Do you remember the first thing you said to the Americans when they found you?

There were so many things. I just think, God, God liberated us. And all the fellows cried, and some kneeled down and cried and kissed the ground because of the liberation.

And, of the 350 Americans that were taken to Berga, how many were still alive at this point?

We come out of there approximately 185 out of 350. But then, after that, they started to die off.

After liberation?

After the liberation, yes.

Why was that?

The conditions, shock, and reactions, resistance to the body. It couldn't take it anymore.

How much did you weigh when you were liberated?

Well, when I was captured, I weighed 149. And, when I was liberated, I weighed 87 pounds.

And where did the Americans take you?

They took us to a hospital there at Cham, Germany. It was just a regular tent hospital. They stripped us from everything we had on to be burned. And we showered, and we were injected--

With what?

--against infections or whatever and inspected for lice. And they gave us new clothes. And then some of us were flown to Reims, France. And some were flown to other hospitals, depending on the conditions.

What was it like for you that first night that you were in a real bed in this hospital after liberation?

I thought I was floating in water because of the fact that I slept on the ground and slept on the rocks, the snow. You just freeze to death. And, sleeping on a bed, you just totally fall asleep.

I remember still, at the liberation, there was a factory close by Cham. And I decided to go see where they manufactured the famous camera, the German cameras. And I got a microscope, electronic microscope, that the Germans were famous for.

And someone, an Austrian, gave me, as a gift, a cross, a beautiful cross, silver. Well, I put it to the side of my bed, and I fell asleep. By, the next morning, the micro thing disappeared. I never saw again, but the cross was there.

Do you still have it?

Yes, I still have it, yeah. It was awesome. One of my sons has the cross, but I couldn't believe it. Then they flew me to-- they flew a group of us. They flew us to a general hospital in Reims, France.

And did you have difficulty sleeping at night? Or, you know, now you're sleeping on a cloud, as you say. Was it difficult for you to rest after what you had just been through physically and mentally?

For moments, I did because of the dreams.

What kind of dreams were you having?

Just remembering back, bringing back dreams, and thinking of the fellows, what they were feeling like, the pain, and reminiscing.

The fellows that were with you or the ones who didn't make it?

That were with me, that I was able to-- in the barracks, we were all-- the condition that they were looking forward and that they couldn't be treated because we didn't have the proper medications at all.

What was it like at night in the barracks?

It was just a thought after another thought of thinking, praying that there won't be another day like this.

And what gave you hope to get through all of those dark days? What did you think of?

Just prayed with faith that nothing like this happened again.

You mean, overall, or just being in the camp didn't happen again?

Overall. Because a lot of fellows have different ways of approaching conditions and thoughts and approaching things that-- they didn't consider that in reality why this and why that. And we hope that it doesn't happen to anyone like this, what we went through. And we used to keep after, one after another. How come that we had to go through this? Why did they designate us to go through this?

How long were you in the hospital in Germany?

From April the 24th, liberation day-- let's see, April, May. With all total, between that date until May, May the 28th, something like that, between Cham and Reims, France. And we left-- we left France by ship to come to New Jersey. We left about the first part of June of '45.

And, going back again, when you were recuperating now in the hospital or even when you were liberated by the 11th, did they-- what was their reaction when you told them we had been in a concentration camp?

To the hospital people?

To your liberators, to the hospital people. Did people-- what was their reaction to that?

They couldn't believe it after they saw us and the condition that we were. At first, they thought that we were camouflaged, that we purposely dressed that way to simulate that we weren't soldiers.

That you were undercover or something?

Undercover, yeah, they thought we were undercover.

And how did you-- what did you tell them?

No, after that, they believed it because, when they saw that some fellows died right in front of us, the condition they saw, they couldn't believe it. And do, finally, the tank started to approach, and the ambulances started getting closer and picking up all the fellows.

Did you see-- when you were recovering in the hospital, did you see any other camp survivors or had the opportunity to speak with any other POWs?

No, no, we didn't because they had us very secluded.

Why did they keep you secluded?

Just to keep us close, to prevent any-- I mean, some fellows tried to escape because of fear or because of reactions to the medications and whatever because some effects of the medications, it fired back at them. And then, right then, when we left the hospital, and then some had to leave by plane to the United States because of the condition.

Like Norm Fellman had to leave by plane because of his-- he would have had his leg amputated because of the severe infection he had. And, lucky, at that time, the penicillin had been discovered. And he'll never forget it because he says, Tony. He says that penicillin saved my life, saved my leg, because it turned gangrene. But we were, in leaving England-- I mean, France, we were forced to sign an affidavit.

So I was going to ask. Did anyone from the Army come visit you in the hospital?

Yeah, I went to a Lucky Strike, the distributing center just before getting to the ship. And we had to sign an affidavit where we had to swear that we never were in the condition or suffered in the condition that we had to go through by the Germans.

Was this something that all POWs had to sign, no matter where they were?

I found out that very few of us had to do it. I don't know why. Norm had to sign it. I remember he said he had to sign it. And others, a few of them, had to sign it. I had to sign it.

Was it just the Berga guys who had to sign this?

Yes, only the Berga guys.

But other POWs never had to sign this form?

No, no, no.

And what was the Army's reason for making you sign this affidavit? What did it say?

We came out under the-- funny thing, you wouldn't believe it. I have to inject this because, at the time Wayne Drash--

From CNN?

--from CNN approached me, I, by coincidence-- I get this magazine, World War II History. And that magazine showed the nine scientists that Germany had. And we found out the United States was involved with [INAUDIBLE] Corporation, Ford, General Motors.

Oh, and then, the wordage of why, because we would also affect the Americans fighting and their prisoners by the Japanese. And they would be severely tortured. Well, the United States was involved with Toshiba, Mitsubishi, and you name it.

But who did we hire for Space and Comm? When I went to work for Space, right after '45, months afterwards-- which I wanted to be a doctor. And it turned out to be I knew how to design because I could do the design very well. And I drew a sketch of the Reims Cathedral. I don't know if you've even seen it or you've been, but it's composed of all the arcs and statuettes are made by statues, the arcs and everything.

And I put it for a contest in LA. Well, I won the first prize to be a designer at Hughes Aircraft. I went to work for Howard Hughes. Who do I meet? The scientists from Germany. They were hired by the United States.

The United States took scientists, German scientists, for aerospace. The Titan missiles and the V-I and V-II were duplicated in the United States by von Braun. And he was one of our top scientists.

Going back to the document, did you ever think about not signing the document, the affidavit? Did you have that choice?

No, they threatened us to be jailed, federally, by the United States government. We had never received an apology by nothing. And I'll interject this.

We never received an apology from our government. And, when we were discharged, thank you for your services. Well, to provide you for the minimum of what you served as a prisoner, we are sending you \$150 a month. And that turned out to be for six months.

How does that make you feel? I would've been very angry. What was your reaction to that?

We were angry. It was a slap in the face. Years later, we received a document by a lawyer, William Marks, an attorney for the-- I have the copies on it. I wish I had shown it to you. And he was a lawyer for the Holocaust, a group of people pertaining to the Holocaust. We received \$100,000 from the Holocaust, all of us survivors.

From the Claims Conference? Or do you know the name of the organization?

From the Holocaust with the help of this attorney that worked for them.

OK, and-- my mind just went blank.

Norm Fellman would let you know to because he's our witness.

I remember what I was going to ask. The German soldiers who were guarding you during the death march who turned themselves in to you before you were liberated, do you know what happened to them?

We never knew what happened to them. They probably might have been liberated because they were not part of the atrocities that they did to our men. Metz and Merz--

The commanders of the camp.

--were supposed to be sentenced to hang.

They were the commanders of Berga.

The commanders of the camp.

They were brought to trial?

They went to trial. They went to trial.

Were you guys part of that?

Do I have that?

Were you and any of the other Berga survivors part of that trial?

No, no.

You didn't testify?

They didn't even ask us. But I understand that Truman-- Merz was supposed to hang by-- yeah, they were supposed to hang. And, instead of hanging, they pardoned him, and they gave him 20 years of prison, then five years. Then he was liberated.

Did you ever find out why?

Never. I understand he committed suicide. But why did Truman knowing that he was an assassin to all those fellows that were prisoners? He was a murderer along with Metz.

And what happened to the other one?

I think he-- I have it in my book. I think he must have-- he was liberated, and he hung himself.

So he also committed suicide.

Yeah.

OK, I'm going to-- we're going to pause because I think we're going to switch.

Yeah, I'm OK.

OK, and you have 26 minutes left on this tape.

All right, Christina, any time.

OK. OK, this is the continuation of tape three of the interview with Anthony Acevedo. This is the aftermath after the liberation. And so how long were you in New Jersey after you returned from Europe, and you went to New Jersey?

When I returned to New Jersey from Europe?

Yes.

Well, isn't it funny? We were put in a sardines. We called it sardines, the ship we came back. And there were only about 85 of us in that ship. And the ship had food for 60 days. And we ate the food in 10 days.

In 10 days?



In 10 days.

And how long were you on the ship then?

10 days.

10 days. So the food lasted.

Yeah, to get back to New Jersey. Getting off the-- getting off the plank there was a surprise to us. We were coming down the plank, and the Red Cross had a big banner that said welcome POWs.

And how did that make you feel, what welcome?

Me us sick.

It made you sick?

Because we didn't have a penny to us, and they were selling us the chocolates and the donuts and the coffee. And we didn't have one penny with us. And I said-- with the fellows, I said you mean to tell me we were prisoners, and we're going to eat, and they're charging us money for that? I mean, the whole boomerang just blew up. And they said no cross for us.

So you started to realize what the reality?

We left the-- none of us had a penny to us.

And how did you feel about the future then at that point, about your future in the United States?

Oh, we got-- from there, we were put on a train. Some who lived in New Jersey State, New Jersey, went to their hospitals. And then, like a few us from California, they put us on a train to head for California.

And how long was that journey back to California?

It turned out to be almost a matter of a week before we got back to-- we got to Camp Beale.

And where is Camp Beale?

Camp Beale, it's California. It's an Air Force base. And we stayed there for a day. Then we headed for Santa Barbara where we didn't know, but it was a recovery center for all POWs.

It had like the motels, hotels. And each hotel had the lobbies were refrigerators full of food. And they said you can raid the icebox. Do what you want and eat what you want.

And how did you feel after everything you had been through?

Well, we felt great. And then, when you slept in the hotel, they said don't touch the beds. You don't have to do the beds. So just sleep, rest, and relax.

And what was your physical condition by that time, by the time you reached California?

Well, you started to feel more at ease. And you get lectures from psychiatrists because of the conditions. Yet, amazingly, in those days, nothing was known about what was a trauma, what was the side effects, the dreams that you get, almost stumbling when you're asleep, yelling and screaming, crying.

So it was post-traumatic stress?

Yeah, and, yet, we didn't know that was it because no one spoke about it.

And what did the psychiatrists tell you in their lectures?

Well, I remember that the time we-- we were there for a while. We received the lectures. They said you fellows are getting a 90-day resting period.

And you must-- you must not go to work. You must not get married. You must not go to school yet. Don't do this. Don't do this. Don't do that.

Well, we did everything that we were supposed to do-- we weren't supposed to do. I remember that, when I received those 90 days, I said, well, I think I'll go see my parents. And, as I recall, I was on my way to Mexico to see my parents.

Your parents were still in Mexico?

Yes. And I got to El Paso, and I went to the--

Juarez?

--surplus store there in El Paso to buy me some paraphernalia just take as a souvenir. And I-- someone got behind my back and put his hands over my eyes to hide to see who was doing that to me. And he turned me around, spun me around. And then he says, you don't remember me? And I said, oh my God. I said General Elpidio Gabriel Velazquez who was the governor of the state of Durango, which my father was his-- my father was his assistant.

So was this a coincidence that he was there?

I wasn't expecting him.

So he greeted you? He was there to meet you?

By surprise, he caught me with these reporters because he was on a tour in Mexico. It was in Juarez, but he happened to be in El Paso, crossing over, buying some souvenirs. And he did this. And he said to the reporters make a note of it, the son of an engineer-- and Francisco Acevedo is my father-- touring with us for the new to come president of Mexico, which would have been Aleman back then in '45.

OK, and did he know that you were a prisoner of war?

Yes.

He knew.

Yes, because he received a letter. Or I received a letter from him when he recommended me a good-standing citizen before I was drafted back to the United States.

OK, so he knew of your war experiences and that you had been imprisoned.

So I said goodbye, and I took the train the following day, got the train in Juarez. And I dressed in my uniform. And then I got to the coach and sat down. And there were very few people.

And, just as the train started to move, oh, and it got to about 30 kilometers inland, then they ask you for your identification. And so I told him-- I said my identification is my uniform. Isn't that enough? That's the passport, isn't it?

I'm a citizen of the United States. So he says, well-- I said, but, if you have any problems, I understand that Mr. Elpidio Gabriel Velazquez is in this train, and he told me that, if I had any problems, to approach him.

So he made a turn about, went inside, and came back 45 minutes later. And he says the train is yours. You're welcome to the train. He said you don't need no ID.

And how did that make you feel after everything you had--

Well, it made me feel good. I had no tension. So that started a good point. But then, at that time, some of other people that were in the train I met by-- they wanted to be amiable. So that's where I met my first wife, which was the mother of Fernando.

Of Fernando. And what was her name?

Amparo.

Amparo.

Amparo. But it was a coincidence to be in the train because she was the neighbor of a friend that was at prisoner of war camp with me. And the fact that he lived-- they were neighbors.

So did she know-- had she ever heard about you before?

No.

No.

No.

OK.

Nothing, by coincidence.

So it was pure coincidence.

She was renting a room-- the garage space to put store her furniture because she was going to get married with somebody else.

Oh, and how old were you at this time?

I was 20 years old then.

And how old was she?

19. So then the funny thing is that, at that moment, I just said goodbye. We split trains. And I had her address because of my friend, but nothing to say-- to stipulate a friendship to get going as a girlfriend. So then I let it go by.

So I got to Mexico or to Durango. And I was on my way to Durango to see my parents. And then I would leave Durango and go to Leon, Guanajuato to meet with the girl that I was supposed to marry, which I'm with now.

And she's in your diary.

She's the one that's in bad condition.

Yeah.

So then I was visiting my parents, and I get the remark from my father.

How-- when you reached home, when you reached your parents, they were living in Durango. Describe-- did they come for you at the station? Did you go to the home on your own?

No, I got off the train, and nobody received me. I just got off the train and got a taxicab and went to the house, and I surprised them. And, when they received me, everything went OK.

What does your mother say?

My mother was crying because I was finally freed after what she had received when I was a prisoner that my aunt--

That you were missing.

--that I had been a prisoner. And she got sick. So she was sick for all the time.

Did they know-- before you reached home, did they know that you were alive? Had they received any news?

When I-- I called them by phone that I was alive and that I was recovering and all that. And they asked me when I was coming to visit them. So then I told them I was coming over. So, when I got to Durango, then they were happy to see me and my brothers and all that. And they were still young. And--

What about your father?

Well, we sat at the table and everything. We made a big salutation with a bottle of-- a glass of cognac or champagne, [INAUDIBLE] And then, in front of all, he asked me, what made you cowardly to be captured? I mean, only cowards let themselves be captured. And all of them just made a remark.

Against him?

Against him. And they said why did you have to say that. And I got up from the table. I excused myself.

And I packed my luggage and said, mama, my mother-- she was my stepmother, but I loved her because she was more like a mother to me. And I said, mama, excuse me, but I want to leave. And I don't want to see my father again.

And did he ever apologize?

For seven years, I didn't see him.

For seven. And where did you-- where did you do?

When I received his apology was when he was dying.

And how long after was that? When did your father die?

My father died in '87.

So it took over 40 years for him to--

He never apologized to me until then.

So where did you go then when you told your mother you were leaving?

When I left, I left-- I left Durango, and I came back to the United States. I was transferred from the recuperation center in Santa Barbara to the original hospital in Pasadena, which was then the Constance Hotel. And I was an eye, ear, nose, and throat assistant to the doctor. And I worked there until I was discharged on December 10 of '45.

Of '45. And did you-- describe going back to the United-- coming back into the United States from Durango. Was that a difficult process? Was it fairly easy to come back into the United States from Durango?

Oh, it was easy to come back, and it was nice to be back here because I felt like because I had my whole family here on this side.

And how did your family on this side of the border treat you?

Much, much wonderful. Even though they were half cousins and half aunts and half everything, but, to me, they were full.

And did you say anything to them about any of your experiences?

Oh they felt bad. They felt very bad. And, yet, how was I to know yet the traumas would go back, that I still had that stigma in me to go back to Durango and tell my mother and, yet, see my father, face him again, after I told him I don't want to see him again, that I was going to get married to the girl I met on the train without even seeing the girl that I was going to marry in Leon, Guanajuato?

So you had two people in mind. And how did you feel? Your parents before-- and we're going back now to before the war. Your parents were sent back to Mexico. They had to go back.

And you were encouraged that, as an American citizen, born in the United States, that you had to serve in the Army. And you go through everything that you went through, and then you have your father turn his back on you and call you a coward. And how did you feel about everything? You had gone through this experience in the POW camp, and then you were in Berga. And it was your father who encouraged you to go back to the United States and to serve in the Army. So how are you feeling at this point about everything that you've gone through?

I put a blank in front of me. I decided not to let that bother me because I had other conflicts that was disturbing me, and that was the emotions and the stress, what I went through when I was a POW. And then what hit me worse, afterwards, I kept that stigma that he said to me that I was a coward. I kept that behind me, and I couldn't get it out.

And how did you deal with that for the rest of--

Yeah, it still bothers me because you never see a father tell that to his son unless he feels like he was proud of anything.

And how did your friends-- your old friends who you knew back in school and in California, did you see them again after you returned? And how did they treat you?

Yeah, I received my friends, and they treated me very well. And the conditions were very mutual, mutually, totally, completely different, not like when I told my father. I says, why do you call this being a coward? But I'll tell you one thing. What makes a person is that-- because he would tell me about Pancho Villa and the big, tall heroes.

I says you know what? That powder that they burned in Mexico is no comparison to the powder of a woman's powder that she puts on her face because our powder in our weapons can burn up your heart before you can say a word. That's what I told him.

We need to pause, please.

OK.

<https://collections.ushmm.org>  
Contact [reference@ushmm.org](mailto:reference@ushmm.org) for further information about this collection