

OK. OK.

Rolling.

OK. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Maurice "Bugs" Bauer on July 24, 2015, in Garden City, Long Island.

Yes.

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with us today.

Please, thank you.

We're going to talk a lot about what your life was like before the war.

Sure.

And then we'll come to the war experiences.

Right.

So, in order for people to get a picture of who you were when you experienced your military service, and then after that what you saw in Germany, I'm going to start at the very, very, very beginning.

Thank you.

All right. Tell me, what was your name at birth? When you were born, what was your-- Yeah.

Oh, please. My name is, if I can tell stories, I was in kindergarten.

No, first, let's have your name and then tell the story.

My name is Maurice "Bugs" Bauer.

When did you get the nickname "Bugs"?

I got the nickname "Bugs" in the army.

OK.

And the nickname is for Bugs Bunny because all of my life, I mean, from the very beginning, I'm very fast in everything that I do. And again, being in the army, one of the people picked up Bugs Bunny. And they used to kid me about it, used to put carrots in my bed, I remember, in my bunk and things like that.

And they go on and on. And when I came back to New York City, why my name is Maurice, but I hated it because there was Morris and Money and all that kind of stuff. And one of my teachers, they said, why don't you use your nickname "Bugs" and write under that name.

Is that what you did?

I say to everybody, like at church, they had me Maurice Bauer. And I say, no, Bugs Bauer. You want to get money? Use Bugs Bauer.

So tell me again, what's your birth date? The date of birthday.

My birthday is July 16, 1922.

OK.

I was 93 just last week.

Well, congratulations and happy birthday.

And I say thank you every day.

[CHUCKLES]

Where were you born?

I was born in Atlantic City, Atlantic City hospital, again July 16, 1922.

In New Jersey?

Oh yeah, Atlantic City, New Jersey, please.

Yeah.

Beautiful town.

Did you grow up there?

I grew up in Atlantic City, yes.

OK. Tell me a little bit about your mother and your father.

OK.

And what were their names?

Well, my mother's name was Rea and my father's name was Fred. And both my grandmother and my mother owned, and my father, who was a musician, a piano player, music arranger, in Atlantic City, they owned rooming houses. And we were right by the ocean.

You could just walk up the block, up on the boardwalk, and go swimming every day. And I remember as a child, there was no such thing as jam back in the '20s and '30s. My mother and grandmother would make me sugar sandwiches to take down the beach because that's all I would eat as a lunch. You ever have a sugar sandwich?

[CHUCKLES]

No jam?

No. They didn't have in jars, at least, we couldn't afford it maybe, but I always remember having the sandwich with sugar on it. And I put it in a bag or something like that. And I can spend the whole day on the beach. All I did was swim and with my friends and so forth.

Sounds lovely, sounds lovely. Did you have brothers and sisters?

No.

You were the only child?

Just me, yeah, the spoiled brat. Yeah, yeah.

That is a stereotype about only children. I don't think it's true.

Oh, I don't know.

[CHUCKLES]

Tell me, did your father have any other-- did you live from the money that you made in rooming houses or was there any other business the family--

Well, my mother ran the rooming house and my father is a piano player, music arranger. And I explain it this way that every year in September, usually the third week, they have the beauty pageant, the Miss America pageant. And you would be Miss Florida. And you would come to my father, you're beautiful, you're 18-years-old, you have a piano part.

He would sit at the piano. And all women have different ranges, different places where you're going to sing, usually from the low G up to a B flat, but maybe higher or a little lower. And he would figure out where your voice was good. Then he would play the music down in the piano bar.

Then he would tell you to come back in a couple of days later, and of course, you'd have \$50 to have a musical arrangement written for about 20 musicians. He would write every part from three trumpets, two trombones, five saxophones, a rhythm section, the whole thing. Copy all the parts, every note he would write for you so that when you were on the stage along with 50 other women, when you walked out, the music would play, you would walk around and so forth. And if you were a singer, he would write the musical background for you. And I was thinking this morning, one of the women was called Beth Myerson.

That's right.

And you can always edit it out, OK. And anyway, Catherine said I shouldn't talk about her, but anyway, of all the numerous women he made arrangements for, he always got paid his \$50, except for one.

Oh.

And later on in life, she was picked up for shoplifting in New York City. Hello.

[CHUCKLES]

Well, that's funny or not, but anyway, I'm from Atlantic City. And again, that's what musical arrangers do, right? All the accompaniment for you to become a star.

OK. So what I wanted to ask then, did your dad have seasonal work, or was he seasonal work in the sense of arranging?

That's a good question. Yes, we did have seasonal work because Atlantic City was a place to go in July and August. But when school started, everybody went home. And that's why the beauty pageant was started the third week of September, to have you there maybe for another week, to keep the people there. That was the big thing for the town.

And he was a piano player. And he, again, being an arranger and so forth, would work in the nightclubs. Matter of fact, he was the Clique Club is still there, that was one of the clubs he worked at. And he would go to work at 10:00 at night, and come home 2, 3, 4 or 5:00 o'clock in the morning, because in those days, if you'd had you show, you play all night. And Atlantic City was a place of very rich people.

All kinds of professions, I should say, would be in there. They would come in 3, 4 or 5:00 o'clock in the morning with their girlfriends and all, and you put the Broadway show on because Mr. So-and-So is here tonight and so forth then, and dance and talk about him.

And he loved it. And I originally wanted to be a trumpet player, and I couldn't wait to become famous because Harry James was my favorite trumpet player in those days. He was so great.

So, in other words, you were born into a musical world.

Oh yeah, every second. Even when I was a little bitty kid in bed, my father would come in again, 4 or 5:00 o'clock in the morning. The little bitty house we had in those days, and I would even tell my mother, guess who was in tonight. It would be some stars at that time who would be, again, not movie stars, but people who were making records in those days. Yes.

Amazing.

Oh, it was.

Fascinating for a kid.

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Tell me a little bit about your parents' backgrounds. Were they American for many, many generations?

Yeah. My mother was from Philadelphia and her original name was Janney. And her mother, my grandmother owned a rooming house in Atlantic City, again, close to the boardwalk, the ocean, and so forth. And as life went on, my father, being a musician, realized that there was no work for him in the wintertime in Atlantic City.

And so they decided they would go to Florida. So when I was a freshman in high school, it was 1936, why, they moved to Florida. And I lived with my grandmother in her rooming house.

Oh, I see. So you stayed there.

And so I would live with her. And I learned how to make beds and take the garbage out. And in those days, there was no dryer or washing machine. So every day, we were hanging sheets on the line and taking them down. And then she was my mother all the time I was in high school, really.

Aha.

Yes.

So your parents lived in Florida while you stayed up in Atlantic City with your mom-- uh, with your grandmother?

Right.

Did you ever visit your parents in Florida?

No. No. And we very seldom talked on phone because it was so expensive, and we had very little money.

Tell me, did your family have any European connections that you said? Had anyone come over from Europe at all in previous generations?

I know that my mother talk about-- I beg your pardon, my grandmother had cousins, two or three cousins that were from

Europe.

Do you know what part?

I have no idea.

OK.

And she talked about them and gave me the names, you know, but as life would be, I'd never met them with her. Her name was Janney. I know she was from Philadelphia.

Jenny?

J-a-n-n-e-y, her name was Sophie Janney, and she was in Philadelphia. And I do know that one of her sisters owned a material store in Philadelphia. And they had a son who was going to be a doctor and I always wanted to be Jerry because all I ever heard about anybody being rich was Jerry, my cousin.

I hardly ever saw him, maybe once or twice in my lifetime. And anyway, and he did become a doctor when he grew up. They were saving for him for--

For his schooling.

For his schooling in those days, yes.

Tell me, did your family have any religious affiliation?

No. We never went to church. And as I can remember, in the neighborhood where we live was a Catholic neighborhood. And I remember seeing nuns in their habits walking around and they scared me to death because they would wear these black, you know, like-- and I had never been to the-- there was a Catholic church in town, but it was not in the neighborhood where we were.

And neither my father or my mother ever took me to church or anything like that.

Were you born Catholic?

Nothing.

Were they non-practicing?

I didn't know anything.

You didn't have any kind of religious?

But going on with it, as life would be, when I came to New York later on in my life, why, I met Dr. Charles Colon. And Dr. Charles Colon was a Christian scientist. And anyway, I think I mentioned that he became my mentor in every way.

And since I wanted to be a trumpet player and he was a trumpet teacher, and at that time, why, he was the number one trumpet teacher in New York City. A handsome man in every way, very large and whole, and he had a studio on 48th Street in New York City, and it was on the third floor.

And the front of the building is where he taught and all his students would wait for him, which he had by the dozen. And in the back was an old, old room where it was like a junk room, where I used to practice. I would go back there and play my trumpet all day long. That was what I wanted to do. I was going to be a trumpet player.

OK.

And as life would be, I was injured in the army, and I was paralyzed on this side of my face.

Are we talking about after the war now?

Yes.

I'd like to talk about before the war.

OK.

A little bit.

All right.

And so you said that he was a Christian scientist.

Yes.

And you then became one? Is that what you wanted to say?

The teacher every Wednesday night, he would take me to church with him.

I see.

And I don't know whether you know or not, but every Wednesday night, people would stand up and tell them the great things that the religion had done for them, because whatever it happened to be, I could pay the milkman today or whatever happened. And it was beautiful just sitting there because it was very, very positive everything that they did. Yeah, and that, I would say, when I was first married, why, my kids grew up in Christian scientists, we were there.

OK.

And I keep saying it all because I see it as common sense, Christian Science, you know, life. Yes.

OK. Thank you. Did you have any Jewish people in Atlantic City that you knew at all? When you were growing up?

Neither. I don't really. I'm sure they were, but with the exception of seeing the Catholic nuns, a church meant nothing to me, or even talking about it.

OK.

I can tell you one funny story, or we can cut out on the things there. That we had Daisy, and Daisy was our colored maid who practically brought me up because she would come into my mother's house and my grandmother's house, and wash the sheets, and hang them on the lines. And many, many times serve me lunch and all because when you work in a rooming house, 24 hours a day, that's all you're doing is working with roomers, and talking to them, telling them where to eat, and to go and all.

And both my mother and grandmother were small people and both them were pretty hard of hearing people too. And they were very personable. And anyway, I remember being in fourth grade. And this is in Atlantic City, and I was in fourth grade. We were studying colored people.

Really?

I had never heard the term before. And I thought there were red, white, and blue colored people. OK? For years I did not know. When I was in the high school band, the only person who came to see me was Daisy, who was colored. She would say-- because she was my mother.

[LAUGHS]

Well, how nice, but how telling about was-- you know.

That was my family and then, you know, that was us.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah.

So it sounds that your world was really both music from your father.

Yes.

And then the business from your grandmother and your mother.

Yes, ma'am.

--with the rooming house.

Yes.

As you were going to school in the '30s, did you talk about current events, and political things, and events going on in Europe at all? Did that kind of teaching or discussion go on?

Not very much because again, the only thing you heard on the radio was "Amos 'n' Andy" at nighttime, that my grandmother listened to all the time. And there were no newspapers that I read, or we couldn't afford them, or whatever it happened to be. So you really never knew about anything that was going on. I remember that the one thing that scared me to death was when Lindbergh had his child kidnapped.

That's right.

And I was a little child in those days. I did not know what that meant, but I kept hearing it on the radio. And I remember being physically scared that somebody could come and kidnap me. I remember that was one part of my-- and one other thing that happened to me was that every movie I went to, we used to go to the movies for \$0.10 and see three movies.

And were cowboys, OK? And so what do boys want-- girls want dolls, but boys want, OK?

Little guns.

Guns and I had a cap gun. OK. But I had no place to put it.

You had no holster.

And in the movies, they had a holster.

That's right.

And so I wanted a holster. And being me, I said, grey mom, in grey mom's house, in the middle of the house, she has, I remember, the kitchen was on the outside of the house, and you open the door, right there was a closet with all the

linens in. This three story house, 20 some rooms was in there. And so I said, I'll bet if I go in there, I can find something to make a holster.

OK? And so I went there. Problem was it was no light in the closet. Nine years old, so what did I do?

Oh my.

Yes.

You took a match?

Yes and--

You tell me.

A candle.

Oh, my gosh.

And put it in there. And guess what happened?

Tell me.

Within 10 seconds, boom, and when I think back of it, I just can't believe it because I was nine, I remember. About yea big, and I knew that where we were, we were on a street called Westminster Avenue, and that was in between New York and Kentucky Avenue. And we were here, and the street went like this, like that over.

And over here on New York Avenue was a place where you could reach up and pull a pin down where the firemen would come. And I knew that that was there. I ran there, nine years old, ran there by myself. I couldn't reach the pin, I was too little. And a man came up and I said, please, pull it down.

And I stood there. I had enough sense to say, they don't know where the fire is. How would they know. And when these enormous trucks come, even in those days, come screaming down there. I went like this, like this, brought them to the house, and went like that in the house. And they went into the house and put the fire out.

And I remember after this happened, I don't know how bad the fire was. I don't think it was-- it didn't burn the house something like that, but it was a fire. And I remember the captain that was there in the uniform. You can imagine I was scared to death. I wasn't crying, but I remember him saying to my grandmother, leave him alone. He knows what he did.

Oh my gosh.

That was something. And go back, and pardon me, we have no candles in our houses.

[LAUGHTER]

Ever.

Ever. My goodness. So, did the house need extensive repairs after that?

I don't really know. I don't know. I imagine they did, but I don't remember. I just remember having that happen. Yeah, I was nine a few days ago.

Of course, you know that will stay in a child's memory.

Forever.

Yeah.

Absolutely.

So tell me what year did you enter high school?

I started in high school 1936, and I graduated in 1940.

All right, so you graduated high school when the war had already started in Europe?

Yes, yes.

And had you heard much about what was going on with that war?

Nothing, nothing. What had happened with me was when I graduated high school, I was a trumpet player, and I guess I was pretty good. And in Atlantic City, in the summertime, to extend the seasons again, they had this Coliseum down there, which is tremendous building, where they had the Ice Capades of 1940 and '41.

OK.

And as life would be, why, the union, Musician's Union, said that only the musicians in the union could work there, number one. And it turned out to be, they didn't have enough trumpet players.

So did you join the Musician's Union?

And so I didn't know my father put me in the union.

[CHUCKLES]

And the next thing I know, why, I have a job playing The Ice Capades of 1940 and '41.

How cool was that.

And I'm sitting along with people from the Philadelphia Orchestra, men and women. And we dressed in tuxedos. And by the way, when you dressed in a tuxedo in those days, you went in the employees entrance. You didn't go in the front door of the buildings, pardon me. Yes.

And every night, seven days a week, I played The Ice Capades show. And while I was playing there, there was a fellow called Jimmy Tambourine, who was above, I don't know, four or five years older than me. And all the rest of the people were all older people. I didn't know who they were.

And the music arrangements were written for four trumpets and two trombones, and we only had two trumpets and two trombones, which meant we were playing constantly, all the time. He would play first, and then hit me with his knee, and I would play first and go back and forth on the things. And again, I must have been good enough to stay with him because I remember playing the whole season there.

Now, when you were growing up and in high school and so, did you take lessons, music lessons?

OK. In my father's band was a musician called Ziggy Elman. And Ziggy Elman had perfect pitch, and he's 10 years older than I was. And every night when my father, every morning when to come home-- see, he was talking about Ziggy. Was so talented, he could play any instrument, whatever you needed.

He was a trumpet player, but if you needed a saxophone, I remember him saying-- he would go to a Hock Shop and buy a saxophone for \$20. And at the end of the month, he played better saxophone than saxophone players. So all I heard was Ziggy, Ziggy, Ziggy. And I always wanted to be Ziggy, Ziggy, Ziggy because he was so incredible.

And as life would be, I ended up being Bugs, which was really crazy. And I wanted to be a trumpet player, and I wanted to be the world's greatest. And as the story goes with me, anyway, we have the Million Dollar Pier and the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, and while I was in high school, my senior year in 1940, my father came home one night and said to me, I want you to come to the Million Dollar Pier tomorrow and there's a new band playing there.

I want you to hear it. I said, OK. So we went down and listened to the band. Nobody was dancing, everybody was standing there. And when they finished a song--

[CLAPPING]

By the hundreds. God, I had never heard anything like that. And when I came home, I said to my father-- he said, I know. And I said, what's that? He said, that's called clarinet lead.

And what it was in those days, you had five saxophones, three trumpets, two drums, rhythm section, but the saxophones were about here, but with the clarinet you could play octaves higher. And so Glenn Miller came up with the idea of making the clarinet the melody, then alto, alto, tenor, and the tenor down here playing the melody.

So you heard the melody in an inactive part. Nobody had ever done that before. And when people heard that sound, and again, the musicians he had, he rehearsed, pardon me, the hell out of them in those days. You would work all night and the next day, you were in Philadelphia, and you'd rehearse all day, and play, and rehearse all night, and then you moved around. So they were always rehearsing. He had the right combination in that saxophone section that no one ever duplicated.

But my question was, excuse me. My question was this, how did you learn? Did you get lessons or did you pick it up?

No, that's what it was. I came home and said to my father, I want to be able to do what he did. And he said, my father's an arranger. So every night at supper time, he would write out for me how to learn. For example, a trumpet is in B-flat, what's that mean?

It means that here is C on the piano. When a trumpet player is in B-flat, he's here. When he plays C, he's not playing C. He's playing A-flat. And now you have to raise him up a B-flat, I beg your pardon, you'd have to raise him up a tone. So when you write for a trumpet, if you want him to play a C, you have to write a D for him.

And alto saxophone is six notes lower, it's an E-flat. A B-flat tenor saxophone is 9 notes lower. And a baritone saxophone is six notes and an octave lower. And so you have to, when you were learning to write for these instruments, learn to transpose music.

I see.

Besides learning harmony.

So you learnt all this from your dad.

From my dad. He showed me every day when I came home, he would show me how to do it. And what did the whole thing, again, was Glenn Miller, because the first thing I learned from him was to write the Glenn Miller a moonlight serenade theme song. And I played that.

In the band in high school, we had a dance band that I was in. And again, it was the same musicians, three trumpets, trombones, and saxophones. And we were all, you know, like 14, 15, 16, 17-years-old kids.

And from 12:00 noon until 1:30, why, you eat lunch, and then you would go into the gym. And my high school was in Atlantic City, is gone now, but it was a magnificent place. It was a park in front of it and it was a building went this way with a clock up in front of it there.

What was the name of your High School?

Atlantic City High School. It was just gorgeous and pardon me, the casinos tore it down, made it a parking lot. And when I saw that, I could not believe, that really hurt me. But anyway, and that was the beginning of me learning how to write. And it took not days, it took years to listen in here because when you, as a trumpet player played, you didn't play like, he played trumpet. Or he played trumpet, everybody a differently.

And you can tell, ah?

Well, you play differently, and so you influence the way the band sounds. And so having better musicians meant the band was better in every way. And because I became an arranger, I would come in and arrange for the band. I would get to know the musicians, who the great guys were, who the first trumpet players were, who the great drummers were. And that's how I got to learn to write better and better all the time. Yes.

So when you graduated high school, was there any talk of going on to higher education, or was it the world of music is opening up and I'm going to go?

Really bright. I have to tell you. No one in my high school in 1940 went to college.

OK.

I didn't even know what the word college meant. All I knew was that I was going to be a trumpet player. And I was going to be the world's best trumpet player. And both my mother and father said to me, Atlantic City is two months of work and then there's no more work. You're going to New York.

So they were OK with you doing this? They were happy that you--

They kicked me out. OK. Here we go, my father said to me, you're going to New York next week. And as luck would have it with me, I can't say, but my life's full of luck. There was a boy called Joe Meredith who walked past my grandmother's house one day. And she was taking out ashes because they had coal stoves in those. Remember the big cans?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

And he saw her and he came over and helped her. And he said to her, who was it playing trumpet all the time? Because I play trumpet. And so I met Joe Meredith. And he was an usher in a movie theater called The Stanley Theater. I think it's still on the boardwalk in Atlantic City, and we were a half a block away. And so we became really good friends, and I saw all the movies for nothing, which was incredible.

And anyway, and as life would be, why, after a while, I was playing the show in the '40s, why, I'm walking on the boardwalk. Who's walking the boardwalk but Joe Meredith. He's living where? In New York City. And I said to him, I'm coming to New York. And he said, incredible. I said, really?

I said, I've never been on a bus before. And I said, I'm going to New York. And he said, we own an apartment house. You'll live in the apartment house with us. And he said, I'll talk to my mother. And he said, you can stay with us, and we'll feed you and everything. And so I said, oh my God. That's incredible. I can't believe you.

And he said, I have to tell you, though, I have two brothers. So you'll sleep with the three of us in the bed.

Oh my God.

[CHUCKLES]

Hello. And what he didn't tell me was, here was a block, right?

Yes.

And we were here, and over in this corner of the block was an L that went all day and night long.

Oh my gosh.

OK. So between people snoring, right? And the L going every 20 minutes.

You didn't get much sleep, did you?

Not for the first month, that was for sure. yeah.

And where it was, all right. So, where was the apartment located, in Manhattan or West?

No, no. You know, I can't remember it. I have to look up in my telephone books.

In Queens? Was it in Queens or in Brooklyn?

No. It was outside in New York City. I had to take a train in to get it in New York City. What's one of the towns outside of New York City?

On which side? On New Jersey side or New York side or?

I think from the Jersey side.

Was it Hackensack?

Where?

Hackensack.

Oh, no, no. Was close to the city. Anyway, that's where I live for a while when I first came to New York City.

Did you get a job?

Pardon me?

Did you get a job?

When I first went up there, no. I had \$900, and I had made the \$900. I didn't know it, but I had worked as a trumpet player in Atlantic City playing at one of the hotels, and we got \$1 an hour for playing. And I was working there six hours a day, three hours in the afternoon, and three hours a night. And with the money I made, I just gave it to, the check, I would bring it home, give it to my mother.

I didn't need any money. They gave me what I-- like, a quarter a day.

[CHUCKLES]

And I worked there during this summer. And so, again, I had \$900 when I first moved into New York City. So that was

a lot of money to live. And when I lived with Joe Meredith and his family, they had a porch in the front of the apartment house, and we lived on the second floor, and there was a couch there that was my bed. And it was very expensive, it was \$9 a week, room and board.

Oh my goodness.

OK.

[LAUGHTER]

\$36 a month to live. I would like-- well, that was-- in those days, too, that was a lot. They were thrilled to death to have somebody there, number one, you know. And I was apparently a fun guy. And as it turned out to be, I knew what I want to do, trumpet wise. And at that time, there were many, many-- not many, but there were 1/2 a dozen musicians in New York City who were the best trumpet teachers in New York City.

And I took lessons from each one of them, and I didn't like any of them. That's me. And so, when I was living with Joe Meredith, he played trumpet too. And he said, I study with Charles Colin. And I said, yeah. He said, why don't you take a lesson with Charles Colin? And I said, well, I want to try this one and this one, all like that kind of thing, which I did.

And so I said OK, there's a month, two months, three months. I don't remember, though. So I went to meet Charles Colin. And from that moment on, like, he was my father and I was his son. We got together, and as I was saying before, why, he had written a book, and he showed me the book in the first page with diminished chords.

And I took my pen out, or whatever we had, said, this is wrong. He said, how do you know? And I said because I'm a musical arranger. What's a musical arranger? I said, I know all about harmony, and chords, and things like that. And he said, oh, OK, fix it for me. And at that time, Charlie Barnett was a band that was just getting started.

And I talked to a fellow called Shorty Rogers who at that time was a big star and trumpet player in New York City. And anyway, he said to me, why don't you go over and talk to a couple of different bandleaders at Roseland. And I said, sure. So I went over to Roseland. And I would go to the bandleader and say, my name is Bugs Bauer, and I'm a music arranger.

But Bug, you only got your nickname Bugs when you were in the army.

In the army, yeah. You're talking about before the army?

Absolutely. I thought you were talking about before the army.

Oh, just be the army I went up there and just studied trumpet with Charles Colin. That's all I can remember.

Did you have a job? Did you get a job?

No, no. No, I didn't work at all. No, I didn't make it, no way. My mother sent me the money, sent me a check each month. Right.

OK.

And we never went out and never bought anything, you know. I remember, my bag that I went to New York City was this big. I had a pair of shoes in it and maybe one underwear or two underwear. A pair of stockings.

So was the purpose of your going to New York to learn more or to work?

No, to learn.

To learn?

Yes.

So right when you finished high school, your parents said, you need to learn more about trumpet.

Yes, there's nobody in Atlantic City. I had studied, yeah, you're right. I had studied in Atlantic City. There were Italian, a couple musicians. Marantino was his name. Yes. Marantino was a trumpet teacher who was there, who was somebody certainly in his 60s when I studied with him. And he was teaching me how to play trumpet, and how to read, and so forth.

And I was good enough as I said to play professionally. And my father at the time was working, again, in the Clique Club in Atlantic City. And I remember he used to take me in around 10:30, 11:00 o'clock, and have me sit-in and play the shows. Because the music was all written manuscript and everybody wrote differently.

It was one thing to read printed music, but to read professionally manuscript music was a completely different thing. And so I used to go with him, I don't know, a couple of times a week to go in there.

And this was while you were in high school?

And play, yes. And play the shows there, and that's how I learned about life, about you girls. And one night, I'm there playing a show, and I'm playing a girl who's singing, and turned around it's a man.

Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh.

When the show's over, I go home and talked about it. My father's laughing. I never know anything about things like this. That was, I was like 18.

[LAUGHS]

Now in your family, your mom and your dad, did they ever tell you how they met?

Yeah. My grandmother had a rooming house in Atlantic City, and he was from Philadelphia. And he used to travel because he was a piano player and an arranger. He would travel around the country. And I had a piece of his luggage when I came to New York City, and it had shows that wherever they would play.

They would play a show from-- so it would be from Cincinnati, or from Pennsylvania or, like that, it was on the luggage. And he came to Atlantic City and stayed in the same house where my mother was living, and that's how they met. And my mother was a very striking person. And in those days, why, there were many, many, many in Atlantic City, bars, and saloons, and clubs and things like that.

And I forget what did they call when you came into the club. There was a name, she had a name for somebody like that. And she was not one of the girls, she was the head of the girls, of the clubs, and she-- OK.

So your mom didn't work in the rooming house, she worked in the clubs?

No, no she had a rooming house. Oh, this was different times. That's how she-- when she met my father.

OK.

Yeah.

Did your grandmother approve of them being together?

I have no idea. I wasn't there.

[CHUCKLES]

OK. OK. But as far as-- there would be some families that might be more traditional, who wouldn't have wanted their daughter to go out with a musician.

But we're talking about back in the '30s.

'20s and '30s, and before that. OK. I just wanted to cover that place. All right, so after you graduate high school, your parents tell you you've got to go to New York to learn--

After I graduated at high school, that year was the '40s, and I, again, got this job playing in the Coliseum, in the high school where we played the '40 and '41 Ice Capades show.

Right, you told me.

And these were, again, I don't know how many musicians were there. But certainly 15, 20, 25 musicians were there, and we were-- here is the Coliseum like this way. And again, it seated 20-30,000 people in it. And that was the ice was here. We were seated right on the edge of the ice above the dressing room. OK? And I was right up against the rail right there. And I could see the girls skate out, and I could look down in the cracks and see them come straight out on the ice like that.

Wow.

And I could look out on the ice, and of course, playing the show, what was written for four trumpets and we were two trumpets, I never looked out on the ice doing the show, not for at least a month. And then I learned that after intermission, why, the star of the show, her name was Vera Hrubá-- "Hroo-ba"-- who was Czechoslovakian, who was in her mid 20s, who later went on became a movie star.

And her husband was a multi-millionaire because the show was billed as a million dollar show, and it was spent on the costumes. And anyway, I got a chance to see what it looked like when they skated. I mean, it was beyond, you know.

Gorgeous must be.

The costumes and things were incredible. And I'll go on, and on, and on.

No, no, no. I need to go back to the war.

Yes, I'll go back.

Yeah, I want to ask you about where were you? Were you working at the Ice Capades when Pearl Harbor happened?

No.

Where were you at that--

No, when the war was on, yeah.

In 1941, December 7, 1941?

I was in Atlantic City. Yes.

You remember the date? Do you remember hearing about Pearl Harbor?

Wait, wait, wait, yeah. Yeah, well, it didn't mean much because again, no newspapers or the radio. That didn't mean very much to me. I knew that I was only going to be drafted, that much I knew. And I was in New York when I was drafted because I remember my father calling me and saying, you're going to be drafted at the end of the month.

And you have to come down to Atlantic City, and this is what changed my whole life. At that time, he told me, Glenn Miller, who was like number one then with his records and playing everywhere, was going to have his orchestra in Atlantic City. My father is a piano player. And on the boardwalk were a lot of clubs at that time because the Air Corps had taken over Atlantic City, all Air Corps.

And they just beautifully in every way. And so my father called me up one day, and he said, I want you to come back tomorrow or next day, and I want you to meet somebody from the army, or something to that effect. So your father tells you, hello.

OK, you go.

One day later I'm home. And he takes me up on the boardwalk. And I meet somebody who is an officer. And I showed him a score, when you write music arrangements, you have a big yellow page.

Can we cut it for a second? All right.

Anyway.

You showed a score and--

I showed the score, yeah, to the person down there. And they said, incredible, love it. And he said, and you play trumpet, great. He said, I'll write a letter for you. And so I went to wherever he was somewhere on the boardwalk and he wrote a letter for me. And he said, go down and enlist at the post office, one block down here.

And I said, yes. And he said, in a day or so, or two days or so, you will be in Fort Dix, New Jersey. And when you're in Fort Dix, New Jersey, he said, you take this letter in and show it to the officer there. And he said, you will be back in Atlantic City in a week, or two weeks, or a month, or whatever that happened to be, and so.

I said, what I would do with my trumpet? He said, take your trumpet with you, I said OK. So next day or so, I went down to the post office.

So instead of being drafted, you enlisted?

I enlisted before the draft, yes. And that was it-- and you didn't know it, and people don't know it, but the number you had in the army told you whether you were drafted or enlisted or not in those days. I didn't know it. My number was 12133400, and other people have different numbers. And in those days, when you got out, they knew whether you were a soldier anyway, which wasn't important.

So I enlisted. Problem was, no one said enlist in the Air Corps, and guess what?

What happened?

I'm in Fort Dix, and I'm there for about three days, and my name's Bauer, and on where we're living, it's a about five, about five or six inches long, with all the little names on it, saying pack, tomorrow you're leaving. And the very first one is Bauer. And so I thought I was going to Atlantic City. And I get on a train, and I'm on a train, and I'm on the train, and the train, and I'm like, I'm not going to Atlantic City.

I know how to go to Atlantic. Where the heck am I? And three, or four, or five days later, I don't remember, I'm in a place called Colorado Springs. And what am I in? I'm in the infantry.

Oh my goodness. And this was when? 1942?

This is 1942. I enlisted in October, October 28, and in November, I am in Colorado Springs. And I always remember, when is Thanksgiving?

The third week of November.

OK, and I'm in the barracks, on the second floor in the barracks in Colorado Springs, in the mountains. Pikes Peak was right up here, beautiful beyond. You look up and you talk about heaven, it's lovely. OK? And I look on the bulletin board, and it said, we are two army nurses from World War I, and we'd like to cook Thanksgiving dinner for 10 people. Call us.

OK.

And this is me, and I'm going to holler at the guys. And so we put together, I don't know, the 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, whatever that happen to be, and they picked us up right in front of the camp and took us to their house. And again, they were two nurses from-- you know.

World War I.

Unbelievable. I'll never forget that. They were incredible . And so we had Thanksgiving there, and had Thanksgiving there for the next two years, I remember, before we went overseas.

So you found out too late that you had not enlisted in the right way, and he had never told you?

I did not even think about it. It never dawned on me. I went to the army, it didn't mean anything. It was two years later, I started thinking about, what did I do wrong? No one told me you should enlist in the Air Corps because they're in the Air Corps there.

And you never saw, I mean, the letter that he gave you, was it sealed?

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Pardon me, yeah, I took it in.

[PHONE RINGING]

Can we cut?

Is that you?

That's your telephone. OK, so when you discover that you're not going back to Atlantic City, were you upset? Were you perplexed? Do you remember? You just accepted it?

I sent my folks a terrible telegram, I remember. We could do that, that was free. You could send it to them because when I was in, pardon me, Fort Dix, and I went in and saw a captain, as I recall.

Excuse me please, cut. Excuse me, you go into somebody's office in Fort Dix. Is that what you're saying?

Yeah.

OK.

I was in the Fort Dix when I saw Bauer was on there. I just walked into the place. And I can remember, I'm skinny. In those days, I was skinny beyond there, nothing fit me. If you can imagine. Everything's fallen off you. And I walked

into, didn't salute me, and gave him the letter. And I remember he read the letter, and smiled at me, and went this way like, they say, enjoy where you're going.

He tore it up?

Yeah. Well, again, I was in the army and this was from where? The Air Corps. The Air Force, bye, bye. That's all he said to me. You will enjoy where you're going. Bing, bing, bye, and smile, and that was it. And then again, as I said, I'd go back in the barracks we had in those days and, I don't know, a couple of days later, why, we're on trains going somewhere.

I don't know where we're going. I had no idea. Nobody knew where we were gone, and that went for days as I remember. And oh, and pardon me, there was no place to sleep. So where did you sleep?

Where did you sleep?

On the floor.

Wow.

Isn't that where you sleep?

When there's no place else.

That was the army, or whatever happened to be, and whenever it was we got there.

So what was basic training like?

Beside the word F for everything that you did?

Oh, I see.

And I have to tell you, this kills me. Just drop the subject quickly, last week.

Let's cut. Continue.

Please.

So tell me what was basic training like?

Basic training when it started out there, again, everything, you know, they never stop swearing at you. And we were out on these fields where you trained. Every day, we were up at 5:30 in the morning because at 5:15 a band would play, and that means you would run into the john, and whatever like that. And in 5:30 you ate until 6:30.

And at 6:30 you would, as a unit, and I don't remember how many people were in my outfit, but it was two floors full of men. So I don't know whether there were 50 men, or 60 men, or 70, but a lot of guys were there. And we're all kids. And in those days, we had double bunks. Were here and there was a bunk above you there. And maybe there was 100 people in there.

And so we were all scared to death, and you just did what they did. And every day, the officers would come through, or the sergeants, or corporals, or whatever these guys were, and really beat the crap out of you in every way because, what did you have? You had a foot locker, and behind the bed you had, I don't remember what else we had, someplace to put our bedding or something like that.

There was always wrong who never got it right. And when they would talk to you, they put their nose on your nose.

That's how close they get, you know. Anyway, and after a while, you start to get used to this garbage, afterwards, come on guys, every day? And out on the field, why, we were marching all the time, and we were training, which meant we were doing push-ups and roll over.

And then we were wrestling and we were fighting like guys. And I remember it was like-- and as life would be, I said I was lucky because the 89th Infantry Division was the Midwestern division, and most of the people were from the Midwest. Most of them were in farming and farmers, who were people who were used to getting up early in the morning and putting up, pardon me, with all this we were putting up with.

And it was very-- I don't know when it happened, but I nicknamed the sergeants. That's the way it started. And everybody picked it up. I don't know why. They picked it up. You can imagine what the nicknames were, OK?

[LAUGHS]

And anyway, they-- oh yeah, they were on the floor above us. That's what it was, that's the sergeants, and this is first place we were. Yeah, they were on the floor. And I went up in the middle of the night, silently in my underwear, with an egg I took from the kitchen, and broke it and put it where? In his shoe, in his boot. Hello. That's me, and everybody knew what I had done cause it spread like wildfire. And with that I became king of the road.

[CHUCKLES]

Did he ever find out who it was?

No, no.

Did you ever hear what he reacted?

He came down and screamed, but he got the message. And he changed. And it was more human because we were humans. And it turned out to be he was somebody who was a regular army person, who the army was his life. And so he beat the crap out of everybody. That's the way to straighten this out, and especially you New York guys with the big mouths, remember?

And I was from New York, when most of the people that nearly all of us, or them, were from the Midwest, who were, yes, sir. You know, that kind of thing. Yeah, yeah.

How long were you there, in Colorado Springs?

I enlisted in October.

'42?

'42. Went in October 28. And I think it came out of the army 42 months later in March of '46.

OK.

And we went overseas in '43.

Did you go straight from Colorado Springs overseas? Or did you go somewhere else before?

I go like this again. We were attached, the band, to the office. I wrote the name down there. I have to look at it. There's an office that runs the whole place, and we were right next door to them. And we didn't know, but the band was attached to the office.

Excuse me, how did you go from going into basic training into being in a band?

OK, all right, yes. I was there for a while. And every morning, I heard a band at 5:30 marching around, playing a march to wake us up. And again, we would eat. And so, on the weekends, if I can remember right, I know Sunday was off. I don't think we were off Saturday night. I think we were off Saturday and Sunday. And Saturday and Sunday you could down to the PX and eat food, or write and send letters, and things of that nature.

That's where we lived in the PXs. And anyway, I went over and I found out where the band was, went over and the man's name was Steg, S-T-E-G. And I told them I was a music arranger. And he said, you know, what's that? I said, I'll write all the music for you. He didn't know. And anyway, so he said, what are you talking about?

And I said, do you have a dance band. He said sure. And so I said, OK, I play trumpet. He said great, OK. And he said, where are you? And stuff like that.

And I don't know whether it was two days or two weeks, but I was in the band. And in the barracks was wherever it was. Next thing you know, they just moving again, you had this much clothing. I had nothing.

So you said goodbye to that Sergeant?

Pardon me?

You said goodbye to that Sergeant because you didn't live in that barracks anymore.

Believe me, I couldn't wait to get out. And at the time, I was lucky too because it was a fellow called Tony Lopata. And Tony Lopata's father was a guitar player who worked with my father in Atlantic City, and we both enlisted together. And he was a wonderful trombone player. And he had studied with Wayne Curtis in Philadelphia, which was a music school, which was number one in all. A great trombone player.

This small and whatever happened to be. And the two of us had enlisted together. So we were both in the band, and trumpet and trombone player. And anyway, we spent a good part of the time together because again, we had no money.

[CHUCKLES]

And I always remember on payday that we walked through and payday, which was once a month, why, I guess it was the second month, I guess I had no money.

But anyway, you said your number, you'd say like, Maurice Bauer, 12133400. And they'd say, salute. And then they give you a check. And so when I went through, I gave them the wrong number, and guess what?

What? No check?

Come back next month. Hello. You don't know your own number. Somehow I didn't know that was wrong. Hello. I was supposed to say MB 1230-- some dumb thing like that. And so I had no money at all for a whole month.

[CHUCKLES]

And I was going around like, can you loan me \$1? That was the beginning of the thing. And then when I-- again, when I heard the band, and I got the steak, and he knew I was a trumpet, and Tony his trombone, like, within a very short time, we were now with the band living with them.

Did that change your basic training?

Oh yeah, completely.

So what did it mean? You're no longer in the infantry?

No, no, we were still in the infantry because the band was the infantry. We played for them when they marched and everything like that. And we went out and trained. And I can't remember how many hours that we would go out and train physically, and then we would go back and rehearse with the band.

And as life would be, as I said to you, I can see where we were in the camp and Colorado Springs here, yeah, in camp, yeah. Anyway, and I heard the dance band. And as I said to you, I sat down and wrote some arrangements for it. And when they heard my arrangements and the band play, I was immediately, like, in charge of the band. It's your band.

And it was fun because when I asked you to do this, you said, sure. It was like life. And I said to myself, why was it we used to be like that? Everybody said, sure, certainly. It was like that. And so I hired-- not hired, but I put the band together, wrote the arrangements, and wrote a whole book of arrangements, which for all the musicians.

So if you had a song, and a song always ran around three minutes long, a trumpet part we could be three or four pages long, just one trumpet. And if you had three trumpets, you had 12 pages there, and if you had two trombones, it was another 24 pages, you had five saxophones.

And I wrote every note. And You're a bass player, wrote a little notes for the bass player. The drum part, I would write out, tell them what to do. And the first arrangement I wrote and I played it for them, why, Steg heard it, and they absolutely flipped. They were like, wow, it was really great.

How wonderful.

They said to me, you know, like, you're in charge of the dance band. Put it together and write the music. And so many times when they were out this way, I was inside writing music.

So when they were out doing exercises--

I was writing, and I was writing. And as life would be, it's even in the book that I have over here. And I really didn't realize it, but I have a picture of my band with me in it. And they have it in my book here of the 89th Division saying that the dance band even played Rouen at one time. When at that time, we were-- I guess Rouen from where we were, from Le Havre, was, I don't know, 40 miles away or something like that. We had to sleep overnight or something. We played for the officers-- not for the men-- at the time.

So this is when you were already over in France.

Yes.

Isn't that amazing.

Yeah. That was all from being [INAUDIBLE]. Yeah.

So you stayed in Colorado Springs for how long?

Well, we were in Colorado Springs, as I said-- I would say I'm guessing a year, year and a half. I can't remember. And what had happened also was that the 89th division went for maneuvers in California. And because we were attached to headquarters company-- bam, I didn't know it. We didn't go. Because we were-- headquarters company is where all the officers went. And all you guys for training went out in the mountains out in California, because we were going to go to Africa and Italy. That's what the original one was going to be for us. And they want us to train out there to do certain-- I don't know what the hell it was. And so the band stayed there.

The band stayed in Colorado Springs?

Played and got-- yeah, we never went with them on maneuvers. All we did was-- we did train, again, every day and so

forth like that, but nothing like they beat the whatever out. We did walk up Pikes Peak. If you ever see Pikes Peak, forget about it. And we also did-- one other training was walking 25 miles-- 25 miles in the same day. And I was a show off, because when I came back, I went to the movies that night with two other guys. Because nobody could walk. But because I was skinny, I could walk up the mountains easier and I'd be the first one up the mountains. And because I was skinny when we walked-- and because like, thank you, and I'm still skinny.

And when I was a kid, the doctors once a year I saw used to make me eat things that would make me fat. Liverwurst-- I had to eat liverwurst to get fat, and I'm still not fat. I go, thank you.

Yeah.

Unreal.

So when you shipped out, where did you ship out to?

OK, what happened-- of what I can remember-- number one, they said we're going overseas, and we're going to be on boats, ships. And you have to know how to swim. I'm from Atlantic City, but the division was from the Midwest. Nobody knew how to swim.

Really?

All these big guys, like you don't how to swim? Are you kidding? We can't get on the boat. You've got to go-- I thought it was the most hilarious thing ever. And anyway-- and they shipped us to North Carolina, of what I remember. And then they shipped us to Boston. And I do remember Boston, not North Carolina.

But I do remember being in Boston in a Coliseum building with hundreds and hundreds of people-- or maybe thousands of people-- the night before we went overseas. And we were saying prayers. And you can bet everybody who was there was in there. And half was on their knees-- please-- because at that time the Nazis had submarines off the coast, and when you left, they were shooting the ships down. And then blowing them up.

So sometimes you didn't even make it out into the mid-Atlantic and you were already gone?

Your were gone. Absolutely.

Really?

Now that I-- anyway, so we go down and we get on this ship. And I remember for three days I was downstairs in a ship throwing up. And on the fourth day, I managed to get up to the top. They used to feed us pickles. Anyway-- and started to eat, and I'm walking on deck with just maybe a couple of other guys. Oh, and at that time I was a sergeant, and sergeants could stay on the deck. They had-- but being Bugs, I was with my men. I went downstairs in the bottom of the boat.

So did you get your nickname in Colorado Springs?

Yes. I was Bugs. Bugs to everybody. That was that. And we go over. And what we didn't know until years later was that on our way over-- we were supposed to go to England. And on our way over, they said you're going into France. We need you, and you're going into the war from France and to Germany. And we did know that. And so consequently when we got to what they call Lucky Strike, which was the cigarette camp there, guess what we had?

Lucky Strikes?

And guess where you learned to smoke? And if you smoked, you didn't have to. Hello. We didn't have any food for three months. You had rations. And the rations-- they were this big, and it was like candy and it was like that. And we never knew why until we went into war-- until went into Germany. And that was the reason why, because all of our

food, including our guns, went to where? To England.

And they gave us 2-inch firecrackers to throw at the German jets that were flying over us. Hello? And I say every day, the kids who are in the service right now-- well, if you're going to be an officer, you can be an officer like in seven months. And what did you do before you and officer? You were a tailor. What the hell do you know about? Everything you know about us where? In a book. Right? That was hopeless.

So in no time at all, I mean, like when I was over there-- because I had a band, I was sleeping in a haystack in France-- in Rouen France. No, no around La Havre. I was sleeping in a haystack. That's all I can remember.

And it was now Stegg and Larsen, because what had happened to-- where they put two bands together. And they came to me, woke me up, and took me downtown someplace to eat food, which was incredible. And while we were sitting there, they said, we are going to be an AMG-- allied military government. And the people who are in that are all MPs who are six feet tall and taller. We will be in a league with them, and what we will do is when the infantry goes through town, we will go to city hall and set up the American government in each town that we're going through, OK?

Before we get there--

Yeah?

I want to go back to when you're still on the boat.

Yes.

And they say-- and you think you're going to England.

Yes.

But instead you're diverted to France.

Well, we didn't know that.

You didn't know that.

No. No all we knew was we were going to-- in the war.

To Europe. Yeah.

We were going somewhere. So do you remember what's in front of your eyes the very first time you see land after having gone over?

Oh. Oh wow. Boy are you bright.

What did it look like?

Here we go. We're on this-- well, number one, when I'm on the ship, and I talked to one of the sailors, and I said, all those little boats. And he said that this boat. I said, it's this big. He said, yeah. All around us were the-- I swear when I saw it, and I'm on a boat-- because the boat's like a quarter of a mile away from me like that.

Right. Right.

And also they were both out there to protect us, because Germany was shooting. The submarines were blowing us all up, which we didn't know, but we had heard about. When we got into Le Havre, we were on the boat for about a day and a half. What we didn't know, again, was we're supposed to be where? England.

And we were going to go to a place called Camp Lucky Strike. And camp Lucky Strike did not have enough tents or cots for us.

And that was in France, near Le Havre?

Le Havre. Yes, camp Lucky Strike. Wait. In the middle of the night, why, they say come on, get off the boat at nighttime. Because the enemy had planes flying. They didn't wanted them to see. And we're in these big GMC trucks, I remember. And the next thing you know we're someplace. And they say, you go to sleep. I said sleep where? They said sleep on the ground.

So you get off the boat. Is there a dock for you to land at?

Oh, yeah. Oh, Le Havre was full of docks Oh, pardon me. At Le Havre-- you asked about Le Havre. When we came into Le Havre, Le Havre-- here we come in this way. Le Havre was in front of me-- in front over here. And all I could see were these beautiful white buildings. Lots of them, two stories high, three stories high. And I go like, wow. I felt I was home. When we got closer, you could see through them.

Oh, wow.

They had all being bombed. Every one of them was destroyed. And that was my introduction to the Le Havre. Yes.

Oh, wow.

And that really set me up. And the other one was when we got off in the middle of the night, they said go up here and walk around. They said if you want to drink, you can have a drink. What do people drink?

Tell me.

Coffee. I don't drink coffee. I drink milk. Never drank coffee. Don't drink tea. And so they put it in my canteen. And I go like, wow. I go-- and it's coffee. I go yuck, and spit it out on the ground. They said get lost. Goodbye. Next. That was my introduction to whatever it happened to be. And then we went again to Lucky Strike. And we got to Lucky Strike. We're there, we're getting-- there were-- I don't know whether there were 100,000 people at Lucky Strike or not, but there were certainly 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 men there.

And when we get there, as I said, they did not have a tent for us to put us in the tent. And we had to sleep on the ground. And I learned after I'm there like a day or so, there were-- there's a town, I don't know, a mile or something like that, or a city. And I managed to get to the city, and I bought newspapers. And I brought newspapers back, and I slept on newspapers. And when the guys heard that, too, everybody ran down and started to do that. And then finally they got us tents, and they finally got us cuts. And, of course, the bathroom there was a hole in the ground this wide about a half mile long.

Oh, my goodness.

And you did your thing-- you went out that in the middle of the wintertime, when it's raining. You take your pants down. Hello. I mean, it was really lovely. And the other thing was the food, because we didn't have any food to eat when we were there. We would have killed-- and there were signs-- white signs-- and it said steal food you're dead. I remember seeing them all over the place. They were about this big with a stake in them in the ground. All over. And so guess what?

Nobody did, huh?

Nobody stole food, but we were hungry all the time. We were like help, help.

So tell me, do you remember when you landed in the Le Havre? If you say it's wintertime, that's pretty late.

Yeah, we landed--

D-Day--

I think-- I'm guessing now. I really don't know. It would be in my book. I'm thinking it was in the winter. I think probably we landed sometime-- the invasion was when?

June 1944.

'44.

June 6th, I think it was.

'44.

Right.

Well, we came in '45, so it was after the invasion.

So you landed in '45. You know that for sure?

Yes. That I know. Yes. Yes. Because when we went in and we went into the harbor, and there were trucks that us up in the middle of the night and took us to Camp Lucky Strike. And hard to really remember.

OK, can you cut for just a second?

Yeah.

You-- OK, so when did you get to France? About when?

I think late January 1945.

OK, so as you say, it was wintertime.

Oh, believe me.

It was wintertime.

We had no clothes for that weather either. I remember having wet shoes for months.

But that's so incredible that you-- you had to be in Camp Lucky Strike in the middle of winter.

Yes, ma'am.

With no tents?

Yes. It was unbelievable. When I think back about it, as I said, you had no food. We were freezing all the time. But this--

How long did that last?

Months. That's all I can remember. It was a long while.

It was a long time.

I can remember saying to myself, because I remember my mother saying to me, if you get your feet wet, you'll have a cold-- your head wet. And I kept saying I'm going to have a cold, because we had-- I don't know if we'd call them boots, but they were high shoes we wore in those days. And even though you took them off at nighttime and you have put your stockings on the next day were dry, like two minutes later your feet were wet. They never they never got dry. Yeah.

And did that happen? Did a lot of soldiers get sick?

Of what I remember, yeah. A lot of people-- a couple of them had anywhere from that from tuberculosis I think.

And so where did you go from camp Lucky Strike?

You know, it's hard for me to really know, because when we were there-- of what I tried to put in my head the last couple of days what happened. All I remember is that I was sleeping in a haystack in France, is what I think. And we had-- again, two bands were put together. Was Stegg and Larsen. were the officers-- warrant officers.

You had your trumpet with you?

No, the instruments-- I read it in the book here. All the instruments were in cases that they had somewhere, but the instruments and all the music I had written were there. But I don't know where they were. We didn't have anything to do with moving it all. But somebody did somewhere along the line. Yes, they had everything.

And I remember having them say take me down to one of the towns, and have breakfast. And while I was there, they said to me that they were going to be in this outfit called AMG. And I said, what's that? And they said it's Allied Military Government. And we want you to keep a band together. And I said OK. And they said maybe if there was a band playing, he said-- like the officer clubs and things like that-- we'll be able to put back a military band again while the war is still on. And so I said fine.

And somehow or another-- I don't remember exactly how it happened-- but someone in headquarters company were the ones who gave me information on what I should do. And that's where in the beginning I said to myself, well, to put a band together, how many musicians should I take or something like that. And they said, well, a dance band is three trumpets, two trombones, five saxes, four rhythm and so forth.

And I said, OK. Now what? And they said, well, you're going to have transportation. And I said I am? And they said yes. And they said tomorrow we have two trucks that are captured German trucks that are going to be yours. We're going to make them American trucks. And you're going to need a couple of guys that go with you.

And so as I remember, there were a couple of guys that were in the band who were really close friends of mine who wanted to drive and all. Because I remember taking truck lessons. I'll never forget it. I took truck lessons in Colorado Springs, and you had to drive down an incline and up an incline on the other side and get out of it. And I couldn't get the truck to go up. It went down. So I said I don't want to drive a truck. And in those days, physically too-- it was a job.

Anyway, but they had-- I know I had two. There might have been more, I don't know. Plus the band members. And so looking at the band, like I have the picture over here with the band, again, I had three, two, or five, six, seven, like that. I don't know. I had 30 or 40 people with me, and I was in charge of them.

And does this mean that all of you were excused from--

Fighting?

Fighting.

Yes. We were to tour the front lines and entertain the troops.

Wow.

And that's what we did. And I have to tell you, and you're a girl. The next thing beside girls are playing music that they loved. When they heard our music, believe me. Like we were beyond being captains or whatever you want to call it. We were the talk of the town. Play it, because when they heard songs that we were playing in those days-- were the songs that were popular songs to them.

And everywhere we went, from generals on down-- they'd come to and hug us, and say thank you, thank you, thank you. Yes. And so I was in charge of that band like that. And somehow they would tell me where we were going to go. And we would go there. And I don't know how we got there, because wherever there was was nowhere. Everywhere. It was out in the field someplace like that. And again, I do have some pictures in there of my band playing nowhere with thousands of guys around. And of course again, my corps.

How amazing.

Oh, boy.

Well, so for morale it must have been terrific.

That was the only thing we had. Think about it. There was nothing else. Food was the only other thing, or going home. Please. It was incredible.

Now by this point-- at this point do you have some sense of what kind of atrocities have been committed in Germany?

No.

That is you're not there yet.

No.

You're just-- you're still military, and everything like that.

No. If you can imagine this-- we're in Camp Lucky Strike in tents, and we are close to where the minefields are. And of what I read later, that the Nazis had put if not millions, hundreds of thousands of mines on the coast in that area to keep the English from coming into that area. And so there was a mine every one foot like that. And our job, along with thousands of other good men, were to go down on the beach every day and dig up mines.

Oh, my gosh.

And you know what it's like to dig up a landmine? A land mine's about the size of a plate, and it's underground maybe about three or four inches. Hello. And if you hit it, you're dead, OK?

So how can you dig it up?

You are trained. They gave us lessons. And guess who didn't have to go?

You.

Where was I?

Where?

I was running music.

So music, which we talked about a lot in your growing up years--

Yeah.

--in many ways was your savior.

It was my savior. I know that. I mean, I could not believe it, because the officers weren't on the beaches digging up things, but people who were in the regular army. I mean, sergeants who had spent all that were down on their hands and knees every day, maybe moving two or three feet to dig up a landmine. And when they dug up a land mine, I mean, then you had to explode it. Hello.

How do you do that? I mean, how do you dig it up? And you don't know, huh?

I don't know either. Because I went to classes to learn how to do it, and the guys who were teaching classes were fun guys all the time. They were throwing the land mines around like plates. Here's a mine. Catch it. Isn't that fun? Come on down on the beach. But we didn't have plastic things in those days.

I don't remember how they touched them. You certainly didn't touch it with your hands. To find out where it is, you had to dig down somehow or another. I always thanked god that later on when I found out-- I didn't know exactly what that was going to. All I know, I didn't go down on the beach. I was back in it writing. And I could write anywhere. I could just sit down and write the music out.

So when you were at Camp Lucky Strike, you say you spent the winter there? You spent several months there?

Well, we didn't spend a long time there. If we were there a month or two, it was a long time from what I can remember.

And when you started traveling with the band that you put together, was it or still wintertime?

Oh, yeah.

It was still wintertime?

Oh, yeah. The weather was rotten all the time when we were traveling. Always. And I remember-- I don't remember what the trains were called. There was a name for the trains with numbers-- 6th or 4, something like that. Anyway there were trains that carried equipment or boxcars. Boxcars, something like that. And we used to travel in the boxcars where we were going.

And as I was saying when they cast me when I looked through there, I remember seeing buildings and streets that I was there by myself on a lot. I just can't remember why I was by myself. But whatever it was, I was treated special by people. I don't understand why or anything else like that, but I was really very fortunate.

And when we finally got to Germany, and we were in Germany, there were so many Germans at that time who were kids, because the Nazis or Hitler like that put everybody in the service. I don't know how old you had to be, but you could be 12 or 13 and you were in the army. And I remember seeing beautiful blonde boys.

I mean when I first saw them-- you should have blonde hair like that. Kids walking with uniforms on. They're children who were coming to us like this-- take us. Like they were prisoners. They said what's going on in the world? Yeah. And I did not see anything bad with that-- what you're saying, atrocities and all-- as I can remember.

I do remember being in a building when the Germans bombed us. And they bombed a building next door, and I was blown across the room. And I experienced that. I was seated. The room was, oh, about as wide as this, I guess. Or something like that. And I was seated over here, and it went off in the building next door. And then the whole thing hit

this building and blew in and blew me all the way over there. But I was not hurt. I got up, like, oh, my God. That's what it is.

Yeah.

That was the only time I experienced anything like that, and I never had any German guys with guns or anything like that-- see anybody like that.

So does that mean that you were behind the front lines? That you would travel behind the front lines?

Yes. We would go, and what would happen would be is that they would bring the troops back to give them a break. And they would bring them to theaters. And we would play the theaters. And talk about being king of the road again. When we played the theaters, we were beyond. And for whatever it was like that, this group, as I was saying to you there, really played. We played our hearts and souls out for the men. And again, we were playing the songs that they loved. And, you know, that was the whole thing with us. Yeah.

And so how did-- did you go further into Germany the more time progressed?

Oh, yeah. We kept going in there. Well, you have-- all I can remember in my head is remembering when the president died. And some guy was a new president. Truman? Was that his name? Who was he? And then I found out he had a drugstore or an apparel store, or something like that. And that's our president.

Because when Roosevelt was president through the depression and all like that, I can remember always going to the barbershop. And they had pictures this big of Roosevelt everywhere. Everywhere you saw them. No one knew anything about his illness or anything like that. But you just saw he was the father. He was king of everything. And when he said things, you listened to him.

And when I heard that, and I can remember I was somewhere walking down the street, and somehow or another I was told that. I remember walking into a church that was open, and I prayed, and go like, you know, I don't know who he is. What's going to happen now? And then, of course, the whole thing with Japan was coming up.

OK, but we're still-- I'd like to go back to when it's the late winter, early spring, and you're touring with the band behind the front lines.

Yes. We went to theaters.

You went to theaters.

And I had two trucks.

And you had two trucks. OK.

And they would tell me where to go and give me the information. And somebody would drive us to where we were going.

And do you remember any of the towns that you were through?

I see the names on there of the towns, cities. You know, I see and there is-- I remember Zwickau and I remember different cities I remember being in. But I don't remember anything about anything. Again, there were no men anywhere. And wherever the women or children were, they didn't come out, because they were the enemy. So everybody was inside. Wherever you went-- and destruction.

What did it look like, these towns?

There's no way to explain it. All I know is that two or three things were interesting. Number one, in France every cellar had wine that they made. And we had canteens, and canteens were what, water? We didn't drink the water. We weren't allowed to drink the water. So what did we have? We had grape wine. Everybody was half stoned all the time. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, the canteen had about a pint, you know. And what was better than drinking in the morning and the night?

Everywhere in France we went, but the houses were destroyed. And when I say destroyed, there's no way you can explain it. When you see them talking about where they had a typhoon or thunderstorm where the buildings are just-- that's the way it was. You couldn't even go into the places. But I do remember when I got into Germany it was different. Completely different.

How?

Rich.

Really.

The buildings, the houses, the kitchens, the liquor-- everything. Everywhere you went in comparison to France, they were poor. And Germany, they were rich. Everywhere we went into the houses, no matter how beat up it was, and I was in houses like I wish I could live there. They was so gorgeous. We'd stay overnight in. Yeah.

And then keep on going, huh?

Yeah. Oh, I kept saying I just can't remember. And the guys I was with made it great, because they were older. And for whatever, they respected what I was doing. And when I said do it, it was done. That was it. Goodbye. What do you want to do? Yeah.

So how did you get to Ohrdruf?

I don't know. All I know is that we had the GMC trucks, and we were-- everywhere we went that I can remember my mind was green grass-- seeing it everywhere. And every road had very large moats on the side of it. I mean large-- about half the size of the room. Deep. There were big enough almost as that you could drive a car in it.

So they were filled with water?

And many of them were, and many of them weren't.

OK. So there were like trenches along this--

Trench. It was a trench on each side of the road, but it was big. The trench could be maybe from there over here wide. And maybe--

Could be like 10 feet?

Seven, eight, nine feet deep. Down like that.

So it could be like 10 or 12 feet across?

Yes.

And seven or eight feet deep.

Deep. Yes. On both sides of the road everywhere. Wherever we went, that's what I saw-- the streets. And when we got to Ohrdruf-- when we came to Ohrdruf, we had, of what I can remember, two or three GMC trucks. And when we got

out of the trucks, why, all we saw-- all I can remember seeing, were-- I don't know. I can't give you the number, but many, many, many people in the moats, on the sides of the road, dead.

All of them were white-- dressed in white. I don't know why, but that's what it was. What I remember, it looked like they were all bandaged up. And when I say maybe 20 or 30 of them were right in front of me going into the town. And as we went into the town, everywhere we went into the town we saw this.

Corpses.

In Ohrdruf. The people dead in the sides of the-- and on the streets, too. And of what I remember, I talked to some people who explained to me that Ohrdruf-- didn't use the words-- but Ohrdruf was an experimental town by the Nazis to kill their prisoners-- the Russians and the Jews, the Americans, whatever.

And it was set up a year before we came in. I think I said March 15th-- March something like that-- is when we were there. It was then a year later, and it had failed, because the people were to work and make, of what I had heard, to make guns and things like that-- ammunition. And would work like 20 hours a day, and got very little to eat. And because they got very little to eat, the people did not grow. And so most of the people who were dead and so forth were small. Not midgets, but that was it.

And again, because they didn't die fast enough, then as I understand that, then they opened up other killer places where they gassed everybody to death. We didn't know that at the time. What we knew-- we had heard they were sent to someplace else. And that's what took place with Ohrdruf.

So those people-- those corpses that you saw that were in those trenches and in front of you, were they former prisoners?

Yes. I thought that the former Americans, for the most part. And Russians. That's what I had heard. Because at the time we were over there, I don't know when we heard the Russians are coming, or whether that was in the movie, and I said yeah or something. But I remember being told about Russians, and I remember meeting them. And yes--

Live Russians.

I met Russians in the theater, because I had appeared in a theater, and theaters were beautiful in Germany. It looked like Radio City. And I remember hearing them sing. And I had never heard acapella people sing like they sang. I mean, number one, they loved to sing, and they were big guys. And they sang their songs. And we became friendly immediately with guys. They were hugging one another, and going through there, and thank you, thank you, thank you. Yeah.

How long did you stay in Ohrdruf?

I don't know.

Did you drive through, or did you stay there?

I don't remember. I really don't remember. Because all I remember-- wherever I went, I was playing theaters with the band. All I remember with seeing all these kinds of things was getting back in the music. And I would just sing to myself and turn it off. Because number one, you can smell death. Have you ever smelled death? Nope. Nobody has done it. I mean, how do you explain that to somebody?

What does it smell like?

I can't tell you. There's no way of knowing. I know what it smells like, though. And all I remember was that we went from there to Berlin, and I remember in Berlin was the first place where I shot a couple people-- the Germans in Berlin.

Really.

And what had happened was we were in a building. And again I keep saying '43 to myself. People with me, and we were three stories up in a building in town. And we were told that the German officers were coming back into town at midnight every night to go home or to go see their girlfriends or whatever it happened to be. And they would walk past the building where we were living at the time.

And so we waited in this building. I think there were either three or four windows where we had what we called carbine rifles about that big. And I remember that two officers I saw come walking down the street-- bang, bang. I shot both of them.

And this was where?

Pardon me?

Where did this happen? What place did this happen?

They were going home.

I know. But where were you? What place-- what was the name if the place?

Oh, I was in a building.

Where was that building located? What town?

Oh, it was in Berlin.

It was in Berlin?

Yeah. Oh, I don't know. I don't know.

But you know it was Berlin, because it was the Russians who liberated Berlin. Was the Russians who captured Berlin.

Well, I saw the Russians, so that could have been Berlin. I don't remember. I just remember being in this building in the middle of town that was like going into New York City. Buildings all over the place that we were sleeping in.

The war wasn't over yet.

No. No. And everybody was gone. There were no people. I mean, such a thing as women and children like that-- everybody would hide. Because again, we were their enemy, and we were going to kill them. I mean, I don't know what that feeling's like, but anyway all I remember is just standing up in the window.

And I remember I had a carbine. And when I fired the shots, the last shot went out of the gun-- the carbine. The clip fell out of the gun, and the clips were made wrongly. The clips were not big enough, so they stay in the gun when you shot the gun. That I learned. I wanted to shoot everybody that was involved with making guns at that time. That I remember.

Let's go back--

Now if I may say so, then in the morning the bodies were gone. So the Germans who were in the town there, whoever they were. Or maybe they weren't dead. Maybe I shot them and they walked away. I have no idea. All I know is I did hit them.

Was that a strange feeling for you?

Yeah. Yeah. A couple of the other guys shot some other people, too-- other things there. I got like, you know, what are you going to do? Well, we were brought here. And I hadn't seen anything bad yet, but then again I hadn't-- this is war. You're supposed to fight. This is my country. Help, help, help.

But was this after Ohrdruf or before Ohrdruf?

I don't know. I believe I don't remember. I seem to remember, too-- what do you call it on the street where you drive up to the street and they have a big thing that comes down that's white like that? It goes up and down, and they usually have a little building near that runs it. Like if you go across a railroad crossing.

Yeah, one of those.

And I think that was Ohrdruf. I think when I drove up to that town, that we had to go through that, I think. Because I remember that in my head all the time-- something that put it together with Ohrdruf. That's all I can remember. I don't know how long we were there, whether we were there for a day or a week or whatever it happened to be.

Were the bodies always there?

Pardon me?

Those bodies-- were they always there during the time you were in Ohrdruf? Did anybody move them?

No.

Nobody moved them?

No. Well, I would imagine that the families would come down and take care of them and so forth. That was the least we know. They were the bad people. That was all we knew.

No, in Ohrdruf we were talking about the prisoners that had been--

Oh, well, they were all dead.

I know. Did anybody move them?

No. When I was there, no. They didn't do anything. I know that other people came in, other troops and others. Because we were in the 89th Infantry, and then the 89th infantry band, as I said there, got together with two or three other bands from other outfits somehow or another. And I was in charge of that, and we were part of the army. I know the 353rd was one of the things that we were part of with the 89th. And reading this over here-- because I didn't know who was fighting who, or where it was. And again, your officers were never in the front. The officers were always back there.

So who explained to you what you saw when you saw those corpses along the side of the road?

Nobody.

But you said somebody told you that they had been Russians.

Oh.

Who explained that to you?

I don't know. No, I think some people in the town, of what I can remember. I remember talking to somebody who was short. That's all I can remember-- who could speak English. And I studied two years of German in high school, and I couldn't say anything. I felt I took German, I should be able to say something. And whatever I said, they wondered what

the hell I was talking about-- they could speak English, though. Everybody. Yeah.

And did you ever see as many corpses in one place as you saw here?

Oh, no. Please, God. No. No.

That was it?

That was-- oh, please. I mean, literally I can't say hundreds like that. There were 30, 40, 50 at least, laying around in the moats and on the streets.

Could you tell if they were men or women?

Pardon me?

Could you tell if they were men or women?

All I saw what I thought were men. I never saw any women at all, and I never saw any children either-- of what I could see of the bodies. Yeah. That was it. I never examined or looked at it-- what was going on. I do remember Stern. In my band-- I had a dance band, and I also had a vocal quartet or quintet of guys who sang together. And when we would perform, the guys would get up and sing. They were really good.

And there was a fellow-- David Stern had a heart attack. One way or another, dropped dead. He was Jewish. And when he went out, somehow or another he learned that what he saw were Jews. And he was a man of ours. We were in our 20s, and he had a heart attack and died. That was one guy in my outfit. Yeah.

When did you hear or learn more about what had gone on? About the Holocaust? Were you still in Germany at the time?

I don't know. I don't know. Because of, again, what little I could remember, we were in France. And we went into Germany during the war. And I was somewhere, and the war was over. I don't know where I was. But anyway, I was back in France, and I remember them saying that married men, men I think like 28 to 30, men who had children at home-- wounded and so forth-- were going home. And if you weren't, you were going to Austria.

And I just can't remember anything beyond that. I don't know how or what, but I do remember being on a train. Next thing I know, I'm in Linz, Austria. And I don't know how that happened either, but I was in a building. And again, I'm in music. And somewhere on my travel to Linz, Austria I picked up a set of vibraphones. And vibraphones are the steel notes that have long tubes below it. And they were in a big case.

I picked them up. I couldn't carry them, but somehow or another, they were shipped with me. Somehow or another I got them shipped. I don't know how. And they were shipped to Austria. And in the building I was in in Austria, I had vibraphones.

And so in no time at all there, I go around, and there was maybe half a dozen guys that I didn't know at all, who were in different rooms and so forth. And I found out there was a guitar player. I found that there was a bass player. And I kept looking.

So when you were-- excuse me for interrupting.

Yeah.

So it sounds to me that at some point your band that you played for the troops was disbanded.

Oh, yeah. Well, that was it. They went home.

So that is--

Of what I remember, I played up until the time the war was over. We entertained.

OK.

Of what I can think in my mind, yeah.

And you don't remember where you were when you learned the war is ended? That's in early May '45. You don't remember if you were in Berlin or Germany?

I don't know. All I remember was that it was over. That's what I had heard. And something to the effect that the war in Japan was on, and we were going to be shipped to Japan. And we were being shipped back to France again. And so the next thing I know, I'm back in France.

And of what I can remember, it was back about where we had come in, I believe. I don't remember that much. And then I remember tents of guys who were going home. And because I wasn't married, and because I was too young, and on and on and on.

And many, many of the men in my outfit married German girls. And along with that, they brought their mothers-- the girls brought their mothers. I had never heard of such a thing, but when you think about it, again, what could have been better to bring the mothers back to America? People had been brought up with the Nazis and lived starving to death. You know, the whole-- was really sick in every way. Yeah, many my friends married and brought them back here.

And when you were sent to Austria to Linz, were you given certain duties, or was your job again to do something with the band?

Of what I remember, I can't remember anything except getting on a train, ending up there, being in a building. That's all I can remember. And somehow or another I had the vibraphones. And I don't know.

And in Linz, Austria, they had an officer's club called the Thunderbird Club. And somehow or another I ended up in the Thunderbird Club. I mean, this is me. I don't know how I got there. And it was an officer's club. And so who is treated better and ate better and had more girls? The Thunderbird Club.

And so every night, where was I playing? In the Thunderbird Club. And I put together this group. I played vibes, because I knew chords. I didn't play very well, but I could hold the chords. And I had drums, bass, guitar, vibes, and tenor saxophone. And again, I wrote the music for the guys. And that was it. That was in Linz, Austria.

How long were you there?

A long time.

Really.

Oh, yeah. Well, when was the war over?

May 8th or 9th, 1945.

I was out of the army in '46 in March.

So you were there for almost another year-- not quite.

I didn't know what was going on. That was it.

And were you playing at the officer's club all the time?

All the time, yeah. I was living like a king, of what I remember. And what happened, which was incredible, too, was the fact that now the Germans were back. And who cooked better than the Germans? And everywhere we went, or wherever I went there, I ate like a king. Forget about it. I don't remember ever bringing it back. We didn't have refrigerators or anything. But I just remember I mean, the food. Like wow. That's great. And because they had been enemies, and now they were us. That was it was, right? Yeah.

What was the countryside like? Was there a lot of-- how shall I put it-- black marketeering going on?

Yes. How did you know that? Yes, ma'am. OK, here's what was going on, if I can get it straight. I really never could get it all the pieces together. We came back to France, and we were living in an estate. There's a picture of it in the book there. Not a building-- an estate with a wall around it. It was gorgeous. I don't know how I ended up there, but I ended up there.

And we learned that because the war was over now, the only money that was worth money was who? England and America. France, Germany-- they were our enemy. All their money was garbage. Are you kidding? OK, and so they would destroy all their money. But if you had American money-- if I'm guessing-- a \$5 bill in France was worth \$25.

OK, so wherever you went with \$5, you are like a king. OK, everything was available for American money. And so my group would write home and say please send money. Everybody but me. I knew it was wrong. Boy was I mad.

Anyway, and now they would take the American money and go to England and become rich.

To England?

England, because the pound in England, instead of being \$5 was \$25. So if you had American money, you bought the pound, and you took it to England. And if you bought 25 pounds, you went to England and you had 100-- well, hundred of dollars in no time at all.

And I remember the man who was in the barracks with me, or in the room where I was living with-- Nick Dallas was around 30 years old. Had a wife and family like that. Built a cafe when he went home, because we were there for a year. And sometime during the year, the army learned about it. And they said no-- no more people can do it. Only officers can do it.

And so if you had money, you're a captain, and you're going home. I have money. OK, will you take home my \$10,000 with you? Because you could take it home. I couldn't take it home. I think I was allowed \$300. Yes. People didn't know these little things. Yes.

I'm still a little confused about the currency exchange. I mean, the black market currency exchange.

Well, the money things were very simple. My mother would send me \$100. They didn't in those days. It's would be \$10 or \$15 or something like that. And I would go to people who were exchanging money, and they were all over the place on the black market. And they would give you-- instead of being \$1 for \$1, it was like five times as much in their money-- in French money.

And you could take the French money and go to England with it, and England would pay you five times as much for French money. And so again, a \$5 bill would be \$25 in England you would get. And you could do it-- because you had a uniform, you were allowed to travel on buses on trains. You could go anywhere you wanted there. I could go to England 10 times a month if I wanted to, or but back to Austria. Because when the war was over, that was it. Yeah. You had a uniform, you were free, right? Yeah.

And so people made small fortunes.

They did. Many, many, many-- thousands of officers came home with zillions of bucks. Because as I said, my one friend who was a sergeant along with me, but much older, realized that was his a way to make money. Took home I don't know how much money-- hundreds of thousands of bucks, right?

Wow.

And there was no problem at all, right? Nobody talks about it. Nobody talks about when we went into the cities, they had banks. Really? And guess what's in banks? And if you opened a bank up and you broke into the vault-- hello.

Did that happen?

Everywhere.

And was it not controlled by the military then?

First come, first served. I didn't think like that. I didn't even know where one was. But the guys who were there-- what's the first thing you do when you go into the country? The bank. Hello? How much did we just give you, Rod? Huh? A billion, billion dollars? Pardon me. I'm sorry.

No, no, no. I'm thinking about did you think much about or Ohrdruf. And what you saw.

No, no, no. Not at all. I never did. I never did. All I had in my head was music. I want to write, I want to go home. That's what I want to do is music all the time. Everywhere. I still do. Even when I wake up in the morning, I'm writing music. I turned-- I have learned. And that's why I'm at my age-- I am the way I am, because I managed to learn how to turn this stuff off. Otherwise I'd be dead. Forget about it.

When I see these poor kids coming back, and then they're sending them up here. What do they do with these poor kids. They saw death. They lost their legs and all this like that. And I go to them get a job. That's what to do. Don't sit at home and think about the war. I don't care if you lost a leg. So what else is new? I saw yesterday on TV a drummer who came back and lost his arm-- this part of his arm. He got a mechanical arm with a computer in it that plays drums. He plays better drums now than he ever played. That's it. This up here you've got to turn it off. That's right.

So but at some point you turned it on to be able to get in touch with us, and at some point you turned back on what you saw in Ohrdruf.

Right.

What did it-- why was it significant for you?

I don't know. I don't know why you're sitting here. I don't even remember when. I turned it off. I don't know why. I had to see something or something in a paper or on TV or something like that that made me say get in touch and say something about it-- that people should know about it. And Kathryn is a teacher, and she's in everything. And she found out that in Washington that there is the whole works down there. And I remember--

Kathryn is your wife.

I remember years ago-- we have relatives down there who invited us down to come see all the things with the army like that. I don't go. I said I've been there. I don't have to go down and see. What do you want? To see what? Forget about it.

Did you ever see any other concentration camps?

No. That was it.

That was it.

Yeah, that was it.

Well, thank you very, very much--

You're welcome, you're welcome, you're welcome.

--for sharing what sharing did see with us today.

Yes, please.

Much appreciated.

And again, if I may say so, I have it in my books, and I keep saying the same thing. That I'm 93. I can't believe it. I still work, and this moment-- I was showing you-- I have my four Play with a Pro books that are on the net all over the world. Play with a Pro-- play your trumpet, trombone, and so forth. And if you can-- no? Can't tell you. OK.

No, that's-- excuse me. Off. OK.

Yeah. Yes, I was saying before that I'm 93, and I'm very well. Never go to doctors, never take medicine or anything like that. But I've learned by playing an instrument-- especially I play piano. But doing it when you're upset or whatever it happens to be, why, has been able to keep me alive and well and everything. And the same way with my children. They play, and it's keeping this straight up here, because it is hard to live today with the world the way it is. And being happy is part of a whole life. Enjoy it now please.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Bower.

Oh, thank you for everything. Really.

So with that, I'm going to say this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Maurice "Bugs" Bower on July 24th, 2015, in Garden City Long Island.

Beautiful.

Thanks again.

Thank you.

OK, now there are-- OK.

Yes.

So tell me what is the photograph that we have in front of us now? Explain what is that.

This was aircraft recognition. During the war, we had to learn as a soldier who the enemy was and who the Americans were. And so they had planes fly over. This happened to be in Camp Carson, Colorado-- Colorado Springs out in the mountains. And they would take us out and had different enemy planes fly over they had captured and brought back. And also they would have our planes fly over so that we would, again, recognize who to shoot our guns with. Because when they were low enough, the rifles we had possibly could shoot them down. Yes.

Thank you. Now we'll switch to-- OK, can you tell me about this photograph here? What's in this photograph?

Well of what I recall is that when we saw this-- I had mentioned before, one of our members in my outfit had a heart attack. And we did learn later that the officers who were involved under General Eisenhower that he ordered officers-- as many as they possibly could-- to come and view this to understand why we were fighting a war. Because no one had ever seen this kind of atrocity.

This was in what place?

Pardon me?

Where was this picture taken?

This is Ohrdruf.

This is Ohrdruf.

This is Ohrdruf, yes.

OK, these are the things that you saw and that other people in the 89th Infantry Division saw?

Yes. Yes.

OK.

No one could believe it. Still can't believe it, because, as I said before, my family's German. Here we are, we're Germans. And I do remember talking to someone. It's coming back to me. So somebody who was a man who was there, and he was describing to me what was happening. And I kept thinking to myself, well how come it didn't happen to you?

But it never came about. It seemed that in this town that-- I'm just guessing is something. But maybe if you're a lawyer or a doctor or something-- a little above the average person-- that you weren't involved in this. But there was a definition of who was going to suffer like this, and be starved and worked to death.

OK.

Yes.

OK. So do you think they were local townspeople who were amongst these bodies, or were they all foreigners?

I have no idea. I have no idea. Of what I've learned just from the book that I have here, the greater percentage of them were prisoners, meaning Americans and Russians and whatever else.

And Jews.

And people, maybe-- probably plenty of people-- didn't want a war.

OK. OK. OK. Tell us what's in this photograph.

Well the middle one is a band that I had. Again, I was the everything-- the manager, the arranger, the conductor and everything. And this was in France, and I remember we were doing a radio show. And we were doing it. I think once a week, and we were playing popular music on the show.

And this is the picture of the band that's here. And then the other picture of the small group where I'm playing vibes with the other musicians playing guitar and bass and so forth, was in Linz, Austria. And that was in the officer's club in Linz, Austria that I was mentioning before that we ended up playing for years, I think.

That's the upper right-hand corner. The photograph there.

Yeah.

OK.