

We can't hear you.

You can't hear me? It that any better? As I think back, the first time I read all of my life, and I think of the two beautiful speeches I heard the other day, I have two images of the conclusion of all of my life.

The first image is of the war, and the understanding, and of the bond between Kurt and Gerda as they met each other. And Kurt announces her freedom to Gerda. It was like a mother and a child bonding together. And I think that the simile is appropriate. The simile fits. It after all describes a birth, a rebirth, a regaining of freedom, and dignity, and a rejuvenation, and return to the real world.

The second image I have at least maybe not so profound. But I think of a book like War and Remembrance by Herman Wouk, which many of us know each, I'm sure. And I often wonder about the verisimilitude of a book that tells about 18 different people and their paths keep crossing, and there doesn't seem to be any touch with reality. There's so many stories going on simultaneously.

Last night when I heard Lucy Dawidowicz, I realized that sometimes these events do happen. Sometimes the stories are so convoluted they really can be true. The same kind of event or series of events, of convolutions, seemed to have characterized Kurt Klein's story before, during, and after the Second World War. He has his own story to tell. And I'm sure you join me and look forward to hearing it.

When he's done, he will entertain questions and answers for a little while. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Friends, thanks very much for giving me this opportunity to relate to you one family's fate that everyone has so aptly called the nightmare years. As you may know, [NON-ENGLISH], this represents a homecoming for us. And then in my case that homecoming takes on an additional meaning.

That's because Buffalo became my home in 1937 when I first reached these shores. Can you hear me?

No.

Start over.

Buffalo, as I was saying Buffalo, I consider Buffalo my home. It has remained so in my mind, even though we no longer live here. But it will always be home. In a larger sense though, if I'm here to tell you about those years at all, it is due to the wheels that were set in motion in my behalf by my sister right here in this city in the late '30s.

A large part of what happened then and what preceded it has remained as fresh in my mind as though it had taken place only a month ago or so. It was a time when I grew up with and became a witness to the beginning stages of those years of agony now referred to as the Holocaust, events with which you are all familiar, and I needn't dwell on those right now.

Even today, we are still reaping some consequences. But it's not about that, that I want to talk to you about, rather I want to give you an idea of how those events affected one family.

I'm talking here from a vantage point of a young boy in his formative years who witnessed the specter of Nazism grow larger and larger, and ever larger, and take shape until it became the monster that we're all familiar with.

Well, let me fill you in on some data about myself. I was born in 1920 in a small town in Southern Germany, a town then was some 5,000 inhabitants, 35 of which were Jews. You would have considered mine an average middle class family of three children. I had a brother and a sister who were older than I, and who have left home by the time I was in my teens.

As a consequence of the First World War and the inflationary period that followed, my father and mother struggled to make ends meet in a depression economy wrought with many hardships and uncertainties. Nevertheless, up to the time I turned 14, I had the normal type of schooling that could be expected by someone coming from my environment. I made friends in school who were by and large also a cross-section of the population, in general. Friends whose homes I visited, and who would turn had the run our house.

I pursued all the activities that were normal for boys of that generation, engaging in sports, soccer being one of my favorites, going for long hikes in the woods, or going swimming in a nearby river. And in winter, aside from all the usual winter sports, I just loved to read books or watch movies, movies, a large proportion of which were American, and a large proportion of those were Westerns. And although we didn't have MTV then, and I am tempted to say because we didn't have it, I thoroughly enjoyed American music.

Growing up during a period between the two great wars in Europe, I tended to take some of the political and economic strife and chaos for granted. Being in that particular place and growing up during those turbulent times also gave me a front seat from which to watch the rising menace of an ever-growing and unstable Nazi party, and to see how its leaders cleverly submerged the requirements of the times to their vicious hate propaganda, blaming most of the ills of that post World War I society on the Jews, who became a metaphor for Hitler's "dagger in the back" theory, which held that those brave German soldiers would certainly have won World War I had it not been for the Jews who sabotaged that effort by their greed and treachery. This, among other things, completely ignored the fact that Jews, like everyone else, fought and died in the German armed services.

The year of my birth happened to coincide with the time when radio came into its own. And during the decade that followed, the Nazis understood, as no one else did then and perhaps not until today, how to harness and mobilize this new medium to their purposes. They realized early that here was an instrument which could be utilized to bring their insidious propaganda to all people everywhere, but in particular to the masses who would eventually sweep them to power.

I venture to say that since that time radio has never been used to greater advantage to achieve the political aims of a select group of people, and to make a party's ideology that of the masses. The same can be said of film. And what comes to mind immediately are those diabolically clever propaganda films by Leni Riefenstahl. In particular one that gets an occasional showing here called *Triumph of the Will*.

You may have seen it. But for me, it was mandatory attendance along with the rest of the class that I would go to at the time. And in doing so, I was able to watch how it swayed impressionable young minds, and how in fact, it ripped across into a frenzy of patriotism and unquestioned obedience.

But I'm getting ahead of my story, because that film was made later, after the Nazis took over. I'll spare you all discussions of the Nazi's progress. Suffice to say that by 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. And then soon thereafter all opposition parties were outlawed. Around that time, I still remember a lecture, our religious school teacher gave us as Jewish students after Hitler's assumption of power. It ended something like this.

While we have seen a momentous upheaval taking place within Germany in recent times, what it means is that at the moment we now consider ourselves lucky if no one comes to our doorstep and simply cuts our throats. This was, among other things, a reference to one of the Nazis' hate songs the lyrics of which would be timed to perfection as they marched by your house or your windows. And one of the most ominous refrains still rings in my ears. And it went like this.

And when Jewish blood splatters from our knives, yes, that [INAUDIBLE] twice as long. Those threats would also blare in bone-chilling terror from every loudspeaker wherever you went, whenever any of the Nazi bigwigs gave one of their speeches.

You, who were born here in freedom and to a great democracy, cannot quite imagine what it was like to be thus singled out, to listen to the sinister voices of Hitler, of Goebbels, and Goering, and all the others. They left no doubt as to what

would happen to the Jews eventually. The world, however, paid little heed to their rantings, nor to Hitler's doctrine, as spelled out in the Nazi Bible, *Mein Kampf*, as early as 1924.

And I might add, the Jews of Germany to a great extent rationalized during those years that nothing like that would ever be permitted to happen by the rest of the world. Once the Nazis took over, we didn't have to wait long for some decrees to come out that were geared to make life intolerable for Jews. A vicious campaign began that was designed to keep the general populace from buying from Jews.

Knowing how hard my parents had struggled to survive in this harsh economic climate and the sacrifices they were bringing just to pay the tuition for my high school in the nearest larger town, Heidelberg. It began to dawn on me that the days when I would be able to pursue my studies were numbered.

Picture then at the time of March of 1933, when I came home from school to find two Nazi storm-troopers guarding the entrance to our house. It turned out that they were there to block that passage to the general population. That scene was repeated in front of every other Jewish home or business that day. It was the Nazis official boycott of Jewish stores and property, a special effort to drive home to the populace that they ought not to buy from or associate with Jews, or non-Aryans, as Jews were called.

Measures such as these, of course, had the desired effect. Because it doesn't take long before Jewish businesses were even taken over by Aryan, quote, "management," or they eventually died on the vine on their own.

After that, each month brought new edicts and laws that were more and more repressive. For me, 1934 meant that my father could no longer afford to send me to high school, and it was felt best that I should take on the trade, since it became clear that all those who could, and especially the young should eventually leave Germany for whatever countries would have them.

I chose to take up printing. Up to now, I still had attended school with my German classmates as before, and I would ask you to picture the confusion in the mind of a 13- to 14-year-old to see all that venom directed at you, without actually knowing how you got there.

We had always considered ourselves good, law-abiding citizens. And now suddenly you found that most of your friends, after some early apologies to the effect that Hitler doesn't really mean people like you, were getting increasingly more hostile and eventually became totally alienated from you. And the only time they would ever speak to you would be to talk to you about being Jewish, and to the tender advice, such as you people will all be lined up in concentration camps if you don't watch it.

What came as a real shock was to hear a teacher I had looked up to until that day espousing the same line. He pointed out that-- and these are his words. There are certain elements among us who are here strictly at our sufferance. They might be treated OK by us as long as they behave themselves. But unfortunately, they don't realize that they're only guests here. And so therefore, that lesson must have been driven home. Those are pretty close to the actual words. Because I can still hear them now.

In 1935, the Nazis passed the so-called Nuremberg laws, which further disenfranchised Jews and should have been a clear signal to for most that even harder times were ahead. If not more Jews tried to leave, especially the older generation, it was because they felt themselves so much a part of this environment in which their families had lived for generations, which had been good to them, and to which they felt they owed their loyalty and patriotism.

Many also still harbored the vain and futile hope that things would not get any worse, and would perhaps even show some improvement eventually, after the matter had run its course.

We only have a limited amount of time. And so I must get on with my story. But I'll maybe to read to you a form letter from the authorities addressed to my sister, in this case. She was older than I, as I said. And at that time, going through nurse's training in a Jewish nursing school in Stuttgart. And this letter came as a direct result of those Nuremberg laws.

It came from the Office of the Chief Mayor and Department of Statistics. And it said, we inform you that your name has been stricken from the election rolls in Stuttgart. And as much as our files indicate, that you are of non-Aryan descent, and consequently are no longer entitled to enroll.

Soon after that, my sister completed her training, and since it had become abundantly evident out of that there was no future for Jews in Germany, she made preparations to leave the country. With the help of American relatives who supplied a very difficult to get the affidavit of support, she succeeded in entering the United States, where she was able to find employment as a nurse.

And as I mentioned at the outset, it was through her intervention that I obtained the necessary papers which enabled me to then come something like a year later. While I was waiting, of course, and for a short while only, I held a job that gave me some training in printing. But it only took a few months before the authorities stepped in, and made it impossible for a Jewish boy, young man, to get this training.

By the following spring, miraculously my visa came through, my American visa. And so did permit me to come to this country, where I arrived, in fact, in June '37, a 17-year-old. Because of my sister having been here or being here at the time, and other relatives that we have, I came to Buffalo. My sister, in fact, has saved my life through her ceaseless efforts to get me to this country.

Let me skip over a great many details, only to say that I did continue my training in printing after coming here, and made that my career. Meanwhile, we were in constant touch with my parents and my brother, whom we also hoped to bring this country. A year later, my brother, the eldest of the three, also many managed to leave Germany. And he too made it to these shores.

Those were difficult times, even in the United States. The sting of the tail end of the depression, as many of you will remember. But just to breathe the air of freedom would have been enough for us. It came as an awesome revelation to me that people actually dared to disagree with their government in those days, as they do today, in public. And when they did so there apparently were no dire consequences to their personal safety, or to their very lives, in sharp contrast to where I had come from.

As desperately as we tried to make it possible for our parents to follow us, we could not seem to convince anybody of the gravity of the situation in Europe, at least insofar as the Jews were concerned. Months went by without any real progress, while the situation grew increasingly more desperate for my parents.

Let me read you part of the letter, just one of a complete set of their correspondence that are still in my possession today. It was written by my mother in the fall of 1938, and addressed in this case, to my sister, and will describe my parents plight better than I could.

My mother says it was gratifying to hear from you again this week, always a joyous occasion. With God's help, you will remain healthy and will be able to keep steady employment. Only I must often think how beautiful it would be if we could create a home for you to come back to after your daily labors. Hopefully, that day will come. Although at the moment there is precious little hope as far as the American consulate is concerned.

As you mentioned, some of our relatives want to see to it that we'll get the still missing papers. But it would be important that this be done without delay. I don't know how word got out that father is no longer working. To be sure, it won't be long before that is the case. Our business was taken over by Aryans on the 10th of this month. Despite all that, we would be satisfied if things got no worse.

Therefore, your worries about us are unnecessary for the time being. That followed details about an agonizing decision which required that my parents either move to cramped quarters now, while those who are still available, or spend the winter largely without heat in their own home, which they had been forced to sell all along for a pittance, along with their business.

Those were times when we also learned to read between the lines of those letters, because we knew very well that they

were censored. There were veiled references, for example, to a "Mr. Darkner," and allusion to the dark uniforms of the SS, in which they conveyed to us that a certain SS man was going to make trouble for them if they didn't sell him certain items that he wanted.

Throughout this entire long ordeal, enduring what followed, they showed the incredible amount of faith and fortitude, and in every letter tried to make us feel better about their well-being than the circumstances really warranted. To the contrary, those letters were often filled with their concerns for our welfare. And in general, I can only say that they exhibited a nobility of spirit that is all the more remarkable in light of what I was to learn later and what we know now.

Again, only a short while after this letter arrived, my parents along with many others, were overtaken by even greater disaster. I'm talking about Kristallnacht. That happened a few weeks after this, and meant that none of those decisions that they had been agonizing over were up to them any longer. You know very well what Kristallnacht is.

But I'll just say this much. That it was an excuse to legitimize the Nazis breaking into all Jewish homes, and breaking them up, and beating up, and arresting men, and sending them to prison or to concentration camps. In my parents' case, those Nazis were led by former friends and classmates of mine, would line them up against the wall, then proceeded to smash most of their furniture and otherwise vandalize their place, while making the most dire threats to my parents who were then an elderly couple.

They dragged my father off to the local jail. He was then in his 60s. But because of his age perhaps, they released him a few days later. And that was by far the most preferable choice, because many thousands of Jewish men were, of course, sent to concentration camps at that point.

A letter referring to these events came from them about six weeks later. We thank you for your letter which reached us this morning. We gather from it that you have a pretty accurate picture of the situation, but hope that you have calmed down somewhat. With God's help it will be possible that we shall discuss everything personally inasmuch as we can hardly find the right words for it.

All of us acquired a collection of mini furniture, which was their way of saying that it had all been smashed to pieces, and a lot faster than we ever thought. Most of it was rendered unusable. This coming week a diverse assortment of our furniture will be picked up. And I am glad that at least those pieces were meant so that they could be sold. Having lost their business and their source of income, they of course depended on things like that to keep going for a while. We need not take our typewriter alone when we move, nor will we have to sell it, which was, of course another roundabout way of saying that it was destroyed.

My parents were then ordered to move into one room over what had once been a stable, and they had to, as every other Jew had to, obtain ID cards which listed their middle names as Israel and Sarah, so that they could be instantly singled out as Jews by anybody. Along with that, of course, they also wore the Magen David and yellow star in this case.

From then on, things deteriorated pretty rapidly. Less than a year later, the Second World War started, which deprived us here in the US of nearly all hope to get my parents out of Germany. Although this country remained neutral for a while, nothing that we did with every [INAUDIBLE], seemed to move at all. And because of the constantly changing conditions due to the outbreak of war in Europe, we found ourselves stymied at every turn.

A letter from my father written in August 1940 shows the kind of stonewall we were up against. Dear children, a few days ago we received the following notices from the American consulate in Stuttgart. Due to a change of circumstances, it is now necessary to reassess those immigration applications that have already been approved as being insufficient, in many cases this approval will undoubtedly have to be rescinded.

We are therefore advising you not to make any preparations for such a trip. Or if you have already made such sufficient reservations to cancel them until you hear from this consulate again. That should avoid financial losses for you or your guarantors.

My father continues, as you can see, our immigration will not go as fast as imagined, and we regret you will be

disappointed. In any case, the journey via Russia and Japan, which was once a [INAUDIBLE] they had considered, will no longer be possible. It is totally uncertain whether or when such a possibility will exist again. The steamship lines, via Lisbon or Piraeus are no longer open from here, in as much as there are no transit visas through Switzerland or Italy.

While we were still making every conceivable effort to get them out of Germany, the following letter arrived from a relative who had been living for many years in Switzerland. I'll read you a part. You must have some knowledge through press reports of the disaster that has overtaken your parents. All Jews from the province of Baden and Palatinate were ordered to assemble in front of their respective railroad stations within a span of 20 minutes to two hours, according to the whims of the local authorities.

They were permitted to take with them 100 reichsmarks each insofar as they had this in their possession. And I think that must have been something like \$20, \$25 in those days, in addition to whatever meager belongings they were able to carry with them. They were then herded like cattle into freight cars and deported to the Pyrenees in the South of France, some 70 kilometers from the Spanish border, where they were left to their own fate.

They were dumped into barracks which two years ago housed the Spanish Civil War refugees. Deprived of heat and living under extremely unsanitary conditions, having precious little or next to no food or blankets, they are exposed to hunger and cold.

Women were segregated from men, and the camp was ringed with barbed wire. Husbands and wives do not see each other for days, and are generally not allowed to enter each other's compounds. The rest of the letter stressed the urgency of the situation and how important it was to get everybody out, lest they perish.

I could go on and on, as to the avenues we tried to get our parents out of this camp in the South of France because the one slightly improved situation here was that where they were was in the unoccupied part of France. And therefore, some type of also diplomatic relations could be maintained easier.

But suffice to say that whatever we did only turned into one nightmarish Kafkaesque exercise in futility that was bogged down in red tape, and disastrous political developments for nearly another two years.

With your permission, let me read you an excerpt from one of the initial letters received from my mother from this camp, Camp-de-Gurs block 1, barracks 12.

Unfortunately, we're still without any mail from you, aside from cable you sent, something we just can't understand considering how much mail has already arrived and has reached others. Today, I can report to you that father visited us yesterday and thank God, looks and [? eats ?] well. In another part of the letter she says, as far as food is concerned, we are doing the same thing. Each one of us provides for the other whatever he or she can obtain. Thank God it's not too cold. But since yesterday there are such torrential rains that one nearly perishes in the water. Water seeped into our homes from the top, and we don't dare go outside.

The only amenity of our stay here is a warm shower, which we can take weekly as a group. But that is all and we would rather forego it. The main topic of conversation here also concerns immigration, of course. I enclose an important document which hopefully can go into the works immediately. It is not our wish, dear children, that you should spend all your money for us, because we know how hard you have to work for it. And at any rate, we'll still need it once we'll be with you if that be God's will.

More important for the time being would be provisions such as sausage, meat products, and my mother goes on to list them. And then she winds that up by saying but don't think that we have to have those things, and please don't be angry if I'm so immodest.

As I said before, this went on for almost another two years. And just there were times when we thought we were getting somewhere. We had a passage booked on a Portuguese ship, which then had cancelled up, and find another ship. And so it went until December 7th of '41 when the attack on Pearl Harbor launched this country into the war, and took all our efforts back not to square one, but back farther.

Nevertheless, we kept up our efforts. And at that time, as I said before in France, that part of France was not totally under German control. It went from one postponement after another, from one obstacle to another, both on this side of the Atlantic as well as in Marseilles where my father tried in vain to get the proper clearance at the American consulate.

The months went by without any progress at all. And finally, in September of '42, letters that we had sent from here addressed to Camp-de-Gurs were returned with an official stamp, moved, left no forwarding address. We knew then that their fate was sealed. Two months later, in November of '42, I was drafted into the American army, which gave me a measure of pride.

It was good to be able to serve the country that would be fighting this evil. And it gave me great personal satisfaction to finally be able to do something concrete, however small that part might be. At the time I received my army training, I couldn't help wonder sometimes how we were ever going to defeat this huge military might, seeing that we were at times still in training with wooden guns.

Eventually, during my army career, I wound up in military intelligence as part of an interrogation of prisoners of war team. I went overseas, and joined the 5th US Infantry Division in Northern Ireland. That unit was part of Patton's Third Army. And so I went through the various campaigns in Normandy, in Luxembourg, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. More on that in a moment.

Let me jump ahead in time. This was after the war in March of '46, that we received an answer to the inquiries about our parents. It came from the tracing service for deported and dispersed Jews with headquarters in Paris. The message was brief and terse.

In reply to your letter, we regret to inform you that Ludwig and Alice Klein were deported from [INAUDIBLE] on August 19, '42, in the direction of Auschwitz, and to date they do not appear among all our files of [INAUDIBLE]. That then is the story of my parents.

I had been in on the very first chapters of the Holocaust. Now, I was to witness the last chapter and its aftermath. Along with millions of others, I was swept into this cataclysm that overtook Europe and the rest of the world. People who would have led quiet lives were confronted with decisions during that time that have stumped philosophers.

I was constantly surprised and amazed by the greatness of so-called average people and the sacrifices they were willing to bring. Young simple farm boys stormed the beaches of Normandy or scaled the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc to help free the world. And that was not just a mere slogan in those days.

But the extraordinary became commonplace under those circumstances. I myself had a few encounters that I took for granted at the time, and their historical significance only dawned on me years later. There was, for example, the time towards the end of the war, when some of our troops brought in a German soldier who under interrogation quite freely admits to having been Hitler's chauffeur.

When I pressed him for details of what had transpired only a short while earlier, I learned that he had come from Berlin, had been with Hitler, and Eva Braun his mistress, in the bunker in which Hitler was to commit suicide, when it became apparent that the Russians were going to take from them. Hitler had given specific orders of how he was to dispose of his and Eva Braun's bodies. He gave an account of how he had carried the bodies into the courtyard of the bunker, had poured several cans of gasoline over them, and set them on fire.

He had buried the remains, or what little bit was left, exactly as Hitler had instructed. That is the identical version I was to read later in the book on those events, written by the English historian, Trevor-Roper.

Now to the conclusion of my story, during the final stages of the war in the border area between Germany and Czechoslovakia, it became my assignment to go into the Czech town of Volary, populated it turned out by [INAUDIBLE] Germans, and as you will remember of course, that was the pretext over which Hitler had annexed Czechoslovakia.

The town had indicated it was ready to surrender. An I, being German speaking, with approximately six to eight other personnel, including the military government unit, and a medical detachment, were going to work out the details of the surrender. Once in town, it fell to me to search for any remaining German troops.

But despite the fact that we still had been shot at by those retreating Germans as we approached the town, I only found a few wounded in the hospital. And I made arrangements for their evacuation. We had started out late that day. And because it was getting dark, and the war was still to last for another day or two, we decided to return to our lines.

We were at any rate not prepared to do much else, or equipped to do it. Comparing notes later with a military government Colonel who had handled the civilian surrender, I learned that he had come across a group of 120 of Polish and Hungarian Jewish girls who had been abandoned in an old factory building by their SS guards when it became evident to the SS that the jig was up.

These Jewish girls were the remnant of some 2,000 and then 4,000 who had been shunted from labor camp to concentration camp for the past few years, and had been on a death march of some thousand kilometers since January of '45. The rest had died on the way of hunger, of exposure, exhaustion, and at the hands of their SS guards.

Despite the preliminary briefing I had, I was hardly prepared for what I found [INAUDIBLE]. I had had occasion to learn the Nazi mentality. And I thought I was prepared for the worst. But the words that I saw had never within human experience been perpetrated in such a methodical and ruthless fashion and on such a scale. As I entered the factory courtyard, I saw a few walking skeletons. I can only describe them as such, going about certain chores, such as getting water, et cetera.

As I came to the entrance of the building, I noticed a girl leaning against the door. She appeared to be in slightly better physical condition than the others I had just seen. My first question to her was do you speak English or German. She nodded, then answered my inquiry about her companions by simply saying in German, come. Let me show you.

How to describe to you the initial impact of what I saw when I got inside, wherever I looked, there were girls lying on scraps of straw they had found, many of them obviously close to death. And then something remarkable happened. The girl who had taken me inside to show me that made a sweeping gesture, and pointing at the scene of devastation, said some words that are indelibly imprinted on my mind.

She quoted a line from a poem, *The Divine*, by the German poet Goethe. Noble be man, merciful and good. And that underscored more than anything she could have said or done, the irony of such a situation. It was, in fact, a devastating indictment of what the Nazis had perpetrated, and it was a totally shattering experience to me.

I remember exchanging a few words with some of the girls. And one addressed me in English, but all she could utter was, too late, too late. And in fact, she did die that same day. There's really a great deal more to tell. But I have to tell this story, because I'm nearly finished.

Of course, we made room at the local hospital for all these girls, so that they could get the proper care under the supervision of the American medical staff. When next I was able to get back to the hospital a few days later, because I was quite busy with taking the surrender of German troops at that time, I found that more of the girls had died and that the young woman who had initially shown me through the scene of devastation had herself collapsed, and had been admitted to the hospital, and was now in critical condition.

Nonetheless, I found her completely lucid, and we had a lengthy and very [INAUDIBLE] chat. On leaving, she wordlessly handed me a few sheets of paper on which she had scribbled what turned out to be a few of her reflections on her liberation by American troops. Let me read them to you now.

Peace, peace, that great word which holds within it the highest meaning of life, of breath of freedom. Freedom. I welcome in the rays of the golden sun, and I salute you brave American soldiers. To us you are not only ordinary men, but mythical heroes, figures from fairy tales who fought to liberate us, and who meet us with outstretched helping



hands.

You ask what we have suffered, what we have lived through. Your sympathy is great, but we cannot speak the unspeakable, and you might not understand our language. You are a people of freedom, and we are human still or again. Yes, they have tried to drag us to the lowest level of human existence, demeaned us, treated us worse than animals. Yet something seems to have remained alive within us, for it stirs anew. It is the soul which is sensitive to the beauty of blossoming spring, a heart which beats in our breasts and pulsates with feeling.

Pain surges through that new heart. Slowly the petrified shell to which truly barbarians have cut deep wounds, is mending, leaving a vulnerable feeling heart. I must tell to you Americans, words of farewell are whispered for you from lover's lips, welcome them, welcome our liberators. I know they are near. I shall not see them anymore. So greet them for me, they who liberate you.

I hardly need to tell this audience that the girl who penned those eloquent words, Gerda Weissmann, has been my wife for the past 24 years. I have often been asked to what attracted me to Gerda in those days and under those circumstances. I hope that I've provided an answer to it tonight.

For years, in fact, you have heard Gerda's version of both of these events. And tonight you've heard mine. One final note, Buffalo was good to us. It was our home, the place where our three children were born, and where most of our happily ever unfolded. And Buffalo continues to be good to us, as shown by the overwhelming manifestations of friendship that have brought forth during the past few days.

Although it will never be adequate, I know Gerda joins me in saying thank you all. And we really cannot thank you enough. And it's more than I can say. It's wonderful to be back home again. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

As was mentioned before, I will be glad to answer any questions to address [INAUDIBLE]. Yes?

How was it possible for the Germans, who had camp in unoccupied France?

How was it possible for the Germans to do what?

To have a camp in unoccupied France?

Well they let the French do the dirty work. They simply turned this over to the French, who had enough anti-semites of their own. And said, you deal with this.

So the collaborated, the French?

Of course, well, this was after France had fallen, and you had the whole--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

This is difficult question to ask, because we're struggling now to [INAUDIBLE]. When you and your brother and sister were trying to get your parents out, were you doing it alone, or did you have support of the [INAUDIBLE]? There must have been the same situation across [INAUDIBLE]. It's very frustrating.

Unfortunately, the message of what Nazism was had not penetrated in the minds of the Jewish communities anywhere. And although there were individual cases of where people did something, in general, there was no such support, as you have today or, well, it was extremely difficult to get these papers. And no matter what we tried to do, we couldn't get them. Yes.

Were there any incidences of kindness among the Christian population that you were seeing?

In Germany?

In Germany, yes.

Yes.

Did any Jews--

Not many. I can think of one. After Kristallnacht, this boy with whom I had associated who was actually a little older than I, wrote me a letter, saying how outrageous these demonstrations had been, knowing that mail was censored, I never did answer. Yes.

While you are in New York, as a soldier, did you meet any escaping Jews, or any Jews in any of the countries you were stationed?

Yes, indeed, I did. In fact, in the last days, just around the days when the war was over, our troops encountered a very strange looking group that they didn't quite know what to make of.

I can tell you now that they were in concentration camp uniforms, and they were trying to make their lines, their way through the lines, first they had to go through the Russian lines, and to the Americans. And our troops at first were inclined to send them to a prisoner of war camp, because that was the easiest thing to do with them.

But I heard about it. I drove to where they were. They identified themselves and told me that they were Jews who had been-- and it turns out that they at the time I didn't know this, that they were a group of Schindler's people, and Schindler himself was with them. They had promised to hide him, and get him to safety. And they had dressed him up in concentration camp uniform.

And, of course, I had no idea in those days who Schindler was. And I could only tell you this now because. In fact, two years ago, I got a letter from Israel from one of those people who somehow or other had tracked me down via a circuitous route, because Gerda had spoken in Los Angeles, and a relative of his had attended that meeting, and had told-- and had visited Israel and told him about this.

And he said you mean, you know Kurt Klein or Gerda, or his wife? And he sent me a letter, and not only that, a short while later, he and his wife visited us in Phoenix. Yes?

Kurt, are you concerned about East Germany's uniting with [INAUDIBLE]?

Well, naturally I have mixed feelings about that. And I don't foresee that this will-- I mean at least in the foreseeable future, and as far as I know, that this won't have any military consequences. But it's quite enough the economic consequences. West Germany is now a dominant force in Europe. And certainly after they get their difficulties ironed out, a unified Germany would present an even greater dominant force. And I think we may feel it here. Yes?

I'm sure that some of the buddies of yours in the army found out that you were Jewish. What was their reaction, both when you were in basic training, as well as when you were in combat?

I personally had no incidents of any kind. I made some very good friends in the army, some of whom I am still in touch with. And let me put it this way. That they I just didn't encounter any of it. But if it was a slight feeling of some of these people who had never seen a Jew in their lives simply didn't know what to make of Jews.

Kurt, again, thank you very much. We've learned a lot lately. It takes a great deal of courage to remember even for a mythical hero. Thank you for coming. Thank you for coming.

[APPLAUSE]

Please join us now for coffee and cookies. Thank.

[SIDE CONVERSATION]