

A lot of mistakes, where you're afraid of making mistakes, and then, of course, moving. But I noticed that after maybe a couple of weeks, I longed to leave again. And it has nothing to do with this history. It has to do with the fact that in a different country, my first thing is I try to come back to the United States.

Yeah. Let me ask you this. You are a chemical engineer. You spent a lot of years designing missile systems. That was a real contribution to the United States in that way. And you recently turned your back on that. Tell me about that.

Well, I worked for a company called Aerojet in Sacramento, went there as a chemical engineer and eventually became Director of Advanced Technology. It was a thrilling time. We were trying to catch up with the Russians. And by working very, very hard, we did it. But also as you worked, you could see success growing under your fingers.

I remember I had a cot in my office, and very often we slept there. I remember a period of seven weeks when I went home for one day. But it was thrilling. It was wonderful. It was an interesting field, and provided a good living, and permitted my family to go to California, which we dreamed about as much as coming to America.

In '76, the rocket industry had declined tremendously, and it really was no longer fun. For one thing, the same problem started to come around for the 10th time. Morale was low. The company I worked for it had 22,000 employees in Sacramento. By that time, we were down to 3,000, and you can imagine what that does to the feeling of the place.

I was also getting divorced, and decided that that was a good time to change.

What missile systems were you involved with?

Polaris, Minuteman, Sprint, Hawk, Sidewinder.

And you were one of the lead engineers on this?

I was one of the-- I was the formulator of the propellant for one of the Polaris stages. And as Director of Advanced Technology, led the charge in the research and development area cases, and metal parts, and nozzles, igniters, propellants.

You're leaving the industry was more for personal reasons than political commitment or anything?

Yes, I think so.

I think it's fascinating that people have come over and your group of your peers, OK, that age group have made such contributions. OK. No one will deny that your work on the missiles was important for the United States. How many more engineers might have come over if there were more Oswegos. Do you feel that? Do you think about that at times?

Oh, I don't know how to answer that hypothetical question. Undoubtedly, if more professionals had come over, they would have contributed more. On the other hand, not on the other hand but remember there were quite a few engineers that did come over. Think of all the people who contributed to the building of the A-bomb.

Yeah, but you were a 14-year-old. If they had brought over more 14-year-olds who knows what they might have done, right?

Oh, sure.

OK. Well, super.

Thanks very much. I've got a couple of cutaways. We will be-- that's very good. Thank you very much for your time. Steve's going to--

Thank you.

But also a lot of boredom.

How has the Oswego experience, or has it shaped other parts of your life, other than the educational commitments you've got? What else has it done for you?

Well, a year and a half in an adolescent's life will shape you anyway. That's where I first really became interested in girls. I had my first girlfriend. And you go through. I don't know about you, Paul. But as a teenager, I was fairly shy. And you go through a painful stage, where you're very self-conscious. And, gee, I don't know how to dance. You get out on the floor, and you think everybody is looking at you and laughing. Most people don't know how to dance any better, but you don't find that out.

And you worked through that during that time?

We all do. We all do.

Has it shaped your worldview, the kindness you received from the Ralph Fausts of the world?

Oh, undoubtedly. In English, for instance, Miss Baker took us. I remember the map of the United States. And she had picked regional authors. Authors that wrote about the South, and the Midwest, and the West, and actually I think of that quite often. And Miss [PERSONAL NAME] teaching us the basics of American history, and the rise of the unions.

You have such a smile on your face when you are recalling all these things.

It was great. They were great teachers.

What did the Oswego experience in being in a camp with virtually everyone who was Jewish, 90%, what effect did that have, if any? And the whole experience of having come through a war where your experience was shaped because of your religious--

I think it was a stage, a stage to go through. And it was a stage we had to go through to be permitted to be here. Now the change going from Germany to Italy was much larger, because we had not intended to stay there, and certainly had not intended to learn the language. Background was fairly provincial, my background. And to be in a country that was Mediterranean by nature and emotions had a very deep influence.

To this day, when I get back to Italy, I relax.

Yeah.

It is my heart's country.

That's interesting.

I have made many friends in Italy. I had made a point of establishing good relations with the Italian utility industry. And friendship has come very easily. It's quite deep--

Especially because you speak the language. That's a real barrier breaker.

Yeah, but because I wanted to. And so anyway, going to Italy had a profound effect.

And I think I've found in everybody that I've talked to, all the former refugees for lack of a better word. I know a lot of people don't like that word at all. But there's this you probably have every right to be mad as hell at the world, and bitter at the way the world treated you. And yet, everybody seems to have come to grips, and is warm and open, and allows

me to come into their lives, and invade their privacy for a couple of hours, or a couple of days.

Well, I'm not angry. I never have been. And I think of Andy Warhol's statement very often. This is a chance to be famous for 15 minutes. I think most people feel that way about it.

Only a very few would not consent to talk with me on camera, didn't want to dredge up the memories, or something of that sort.

Well, that's the way they feel.

But I think it's remarkable how warm as a group, I've done a lot of stories with a lot of people. And sometimes you meet you nice people. But these people are, as a whole, warm. And I think it's interesting that many of you are still in contact.

Yeah, well, it was-- I don't know it was a typical refugee group. Look at the waves that have come over recently-- Vietnamese, Haitians. I think the circumstances were bitter also, and their start in the United States was at a lower economic level. The people who did come over, although they had lost time, worked themselves up again to a level which they were familiar. So why should they be unhappy?

That's interesting.

The unhappiness I don't think is with the United States. I read the book, and I've talked to people, and I hear this bitterness described at being kept in a camp. And if that's the way people feel, fine. But to my mind, that is not reasonable. We were received. We were brought over. We were housed and fed.