

I'm Sally Weinberg. Today we are interviewing Harold Mailman, a Holocaust liberator. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section.

Mr. Mailman, when and where were you born?

I was born in New York City, January 30, 1923.

And when did you enter the American army? Actually, I entered into the enlisted reserve in December of '42 and actually into active service in July of '43.

So you were an enlisted man?

Mhm.

What was your military rank?

I went all the way up to Private First Class.

What were your duties?

I was a pole lineman.

Do you remember your army serial number, then?

Every American soldier, I believe, remembers his number. It was 12192955.

Were you the recipient of any honors bestowed by the Army?

Nothing personal, the only personal honor I had was very common. That was a good conduct ribbon, which was given out like chewing gum.

Do you have any pictures of yourself when you were in the army?

Yes, I did find a few of them. Let me show you. This was taken at Camp Crowder, Missouri, where I took my lineman training. This little picture is me.

Much more interesting was I found this. It's marked somewhere in Belgium, October 1944. There's a very scared young man clutching his carbine. I don't know if you'll be able to see it, but my linesman's pliers are on my hip. I think I kept my pliers with me just as much as I did my rifle.

Here's another picture. It's somewhat interesting because it was taken a year later, also in Belgium, but this was after the Ardennes breakthrough. You see, I put a lot of weight on. We were looking a lot more seedy than we did early on.

What were you doing prior to entering the army?

Oh, I was a shipping clerk in the garment center of New York City.

What was your occupation after World War II?

Well, you mean what do I do now?

No, what did you do following the army?

Oh, I came out and, once again, became a shipping clerk. After a period of time, I went to school. I started college in 1949.

Did you graduate?

Yes. I graduated from NYU School of Education in 1951. Then I went to Columbia University School of Social Work and graduated in '53.

What is your current occupation?

Currently, I'm executive director of an organization called Council Gardens, which provides subsidized housing for old people.

Are you Jewish?

Yes, I am.

When did you land in Europe with your army unit?

We landed in Europe in England. The problem is I was running 104 fever with the measles. I caught measles aboard ship.

I remember they took me off in Bristol, England. I'm not totally sure. I think I might be able to have it, because what I do have, my company printed the dates out of the company reports.

Our unit left New York in February 27, 1944. The unit arrived in Atherstone in the Midlands, a place called Camp Merevale, in March 10.

Where is that located, Merevale?

In the Midlands, Merevale, I've been back there, by the way, it's between Birmingham and Coventry.

In England?

In England. I was not with the unit, because I was in the hospital having measles.

But you were in England?

Oh, yeah. That's where we landed in England. That's where we first--

Do you know the division and regiment or battalion that you were with?

Yeah. We were in the 32nd Signal Construction Battalion, which was an independent unit attached to First Army. I was in what was called Team 12. We called them teams instead of squads, Team 12 of Company A of the 32nd Signal Construction Battalion, attached to First Army headquarters.

And who was your commander?

I have to say that I've searched. I cannot remember the name of my battalion commander, though I know our company officers quite well.

Who was that?

It's interesting, because it may be relevant that we used to call him Herman the German. His name was Herman Seivken,

or really [GERMAN] Seivken.

Could you spell his last name for me?

Yeah. Captain Seivken, who was my company commander, was S-E-I-V-K-E-N, Herman P. Seivken.

S-E-I--

V.

V.

K-E-N.

K-A-N?

K-E-N.

K-E-N?

Mhm.

All right.

Now, I don't know if it's relevant. The executive officer was Fred Kershaw.

How does he spell--

He was a first lieutenant.

--last name spelled?

K-E-R-S-H-A-W. My platoon commander, and I don't remember his first name, was a First Lieutenant Mullican. That was M-U-L-L-I-C-A-N. The assistant platoon commander, a man I love very dearly, was a Lieutenant Teagardner. We used to call him Mr. T. That is T-E-A-G-A-R-D-N-E-R.

G-A-R?

D.

D.

N-E-R, Lieutenant Teagardner, he was a very old man. I mean, he must have been all of 40 years old. I mean, so he was ancient for this work.

Are there any other names of leaders of your squadron that you remember?

I remember our battalion surgeon, Captain Greenblatt, who in civilian life had been a obstetrician-gynecologist, drafted, or serving in the army while he was working as a battalion surgeon. We were involved in accidents and things of that sort. He was from Illinois. I remember he complained he wanted to be back in his practice in obstetrics and gynecology.

These men were with you all the way up through the time you left the army?

No, no.

Who was in command in at the time you left in 1945, would that have been?

Yes. We went from the Europe to the Pacific directly. And by the time we left Europe, a number of the officers and men had accumulated enough points, as they were known, so that they were discharged. Captain Seivken left us in Marseilles, France, before we went to the Pacific.

Lieutenant Kershaw became the senior officer. Lieutenant Kershaw became our company commander, and Lieutenant Von Eisen, that's another name, who was our supply officer, who, again, I liked very much.

How do you spell his last name?

It was V-O-N, capital V-O-N, capital E-I-S-E-N, when we were in the Pacific, he became our executive officer.

After you landed in Europe, which you said was England, what direction did your division take? What happened to your group?

Well, we were stationed, as I said before, in a town called Atherstone in the Midlands, a coal mining--

Could you spell Atherstone for me?

A-T-H-E-R-S-T-O-N. They pronounce it Atherstone. The next nearest town people might know is Nuneaton, and then, again, they were between--

Could you spell Nuneaton?

N-U-N-E-A-T-O-N.

How long did you stay in those cities?

Well, actually, we stayed in Atherstone. We left Atherstone-- I'm fumbling for my chart, again-- probably in May. Here we are. Probably in May of '44 that I have it here. Yeah.

Yes. We left Atherstone May 28, '44.

What were you doing in England? What was your group doing?

Mostly preparing our vehicles, we had a great number. We had to carry all of our-- we were in construction of heavy, permanent, telephone and telegraph communication. So that we had to carry all of our material with us, which meant we had many, many vehicles and equipment that we had to have with us.

In addition, we were studying a Canadian form of temporary construction-- I remember the name, it was called multi-airline construction-- while we were in England. Then we left, went to Bessels Leigh, which is near Oxford. I was back there a few months ago.

How do you spell that?

Bessels Leigh? B-E-S-S-E-L-S and capital L-E-I-G-H in Berkshire.

In England?

Very close to Oxford.

Was there any warfare going on near you or with your battalion?

Not in England-- I don't even remember any bombing in England. Well, I didn't witness it. The docks in Bristol, where we disembarked, were totally just a shambles, but we didn't really see anybody shooting at us in anger until we landed in France.

When was that?

I was in a detachment that landed in France on June 13 of '44 on Omaha Beach.

What happened to your group at that point?

We dug in and waited for the next day, and then joined the rest of the unit who would come behind us. We bivouacked in a place called Osmanville, Isigny.

How do you spell that?

Isigny is I-S-I-G-N-Y.

Did you have any feelings at this point about fighting the Nazis and the military war that you were in?

Yeah, my eyes were very bad. I was extremely myopic. I had some conviction, I suppose, partially out of being Jewish and partially out of being what was known as a premature antifascist, I suppose, except I was very young. I enlisted. We were very proud of always differentiating ourselves between the guys who enlisted and the guys who were drafted. So the serial number that I gave you earlier indicates, one, that I enlisted and where it was from.

And you had very strong feelings?

Yeah. I had read about only one concentration camp. I knew what was happening to the Jewish people and to political opponents of the Nazis. I knew about Dachau, but I had not known about Buchenwald, which I got to later.

What was the attitude of the other soldiers in your group?

Most of the enlisted men in my outfit, not all, were from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky with a number of them who were literally illiterate, certainly unsophisticated. My own buddy, who was very close to me, whose picture I showed you earlier, told me at one point he thought Jews had horns, you know, where he came from, literally, from the picture of Moses.

So I don't think that most of the men in my outfit, and that's not true of all of them, but most of the men in my unit, certainly there were very few Jews. There were Jews, but very few Jews in the battalion, and most of them had no sense of purpose, I think. They were drafted. So they went.

Were you aware of any anti-Semitic attitudes on the part of the soldiers?

Oh, yeah, much, much, yes, yeah. I know when I joined my unit, my colonel, who was-- by the way, our officers either came from Southern Bell or from Illinois Bell, literally, because they had worked and done this work. That's why--

When you say Bell?

Oh, the Bell Telephone Company, our main reference books were actually publications by AT&T in order to do that work. My colonel, who was from Southern Bell, and the prejudice was, of course, mostly from the Southerners, when I came into the battalion and he interviewed me, I remember his comment. "You people"-- meaning Jews-- "don't climb." That was the term we used for being a lineman, to climb. And I said "no, I'm a lineman. I'm going to climb."

It was true that most of not just the Jews, but the guys from the big cities, from Chicago and New York, but most of the

non-Southern people were from Chicago, were not interested in being linemen. So a lot of the Jewish people were truck drivers, cooks, clerks, and things of that sort. I was a lineman.

What was that colonel's name?

I wish I could remember. I tried. I've been looking through some of this old material. I don't know the colonel's name. By the way, there were other incidents from enlisted men or even our battalion, our company sergeant major. There were a number of incidents.

For instance?

Well, I remember one time in France, after the liberation, the French people would shave the heads of the women who had been sleeping with the Germans. I was on guard duty at our camp. I saw these women coming into the camp, and I ran them out.

One of the guys came after me and literally started fighting, using anti-Semitic epithets because I wouldn't let these women who had been collaborators into the camp. They were prostitutes. They were going to one of the guy's tents.

I remember my master sergeant making remarks about how clever Jews were. They outwitted each other, and they made money off each other, and things of that sort, some of the usual canards.

Did you have any close friends in your unit that were Jewish?

No. As a matter of fact, my closest buddy was from Dothan, Alabama. You saw his picture.

I think I said this before. I may be repeating myself. He had no contact with Jews before. He thought that Jews, from the pictures of Moses, had horns. He was my closest friend. We helped each other.

What was his attitude about fighting the war?

Well, let's say I proselytized him. I convinced him that there was something worthwhile meeting a Jew and getting to know him and, I mean, we lived together and took care of each other for a long time. Before we left for Europe, it happens we were very close to where my parents lived. He met my parents.

He met the woman who I was to marry later. So the Jews became real people to him. I think this helped him understand how I felt.

What concentration camp unit did you liberate, and when was that?

OK. My unit ran a coaxial cable from the city of Weimar.

How do you spell Weimar?

Weimar is W-E-I-M-A-R.

In what country is that?

In Germany, it's in what's now the Eastern section of Germany. Have I got it? Well, actually, yeah, Weimar, V-E-I-M-A-R. I guess a distance, I recall, about two kilometers. We ran this cable, which eventually would be used for teletype communication, and in the normal process, we dropped it right at the gate.

Of where?

Of the concentration camp.

What was the name of it?

Buchenwald. That was the first contact that we had.

And when was that, the date?

Well, again, it's not totally clear. Our unit moved to Weimar on April 19, '45. Now it could have been a day or a couple of days before or after, not unusual for us to work in an area, go back to the old bivouac area, and then be working in it, and then move the bivouac area. So I'm not precisely sure.

My memory, and possibly distorted, makes me think that we dropped it on the first day, that was, we finished the cable on the first day. Then two days later, my commanding officer, and that's a very interesting story, made us go into the concentration camp.

When you say dropped the cable, what does that mean, drop the cable?

It's jargon. It's a technical term. We don't run it right up to the machinery, the teletype machines or the telephones that were to use it. We deadended it, was another way of putting it. We just left the cable ended so that the local units who were in the camp and who would set up offices in the camp, would then run the wire from where we left it, the end of the cable, into the telephones or teletype machines.

Would you describe and tell me the story about your commanding officer who you said wanted you to enter the camp?

Yeah. For those people who were in the service at that time, once you left formal barracks kind of life, and literally, we were in construction, we were in what was called a construction battalion, we had not had what they call a formation. A formation is where people come out, they're counted, they sound off their names, and they checked off. We had not had a formation in, it seemed, forever.

Our CO, our company commander, Captain Seivken, called a formation, which in and of itself was highly unusual. After we answered roll call, which, again, was most unusual, we loaded onto trucks, and he had us driven into the camp. He insisted that his company see the camp.

But he was a German. He spoke with a very heavy German accent. They said he had been in the service in World War I. I don't know if that's true.

As I say, he was a very old man. He must have been about 40, you see, which was terribly old for us, and I don't know whether literally he was in the American-- he lived in America for some time. Whether he was in the American army or not, I don't know.

That was the story that we were told. But he insisted. This, what I would call a very righteous German, insisted that the men in his unit understand what the meaning of this was.

Can you describe what happened the day you entered the camp?

Well, I'd rather start the day before we entered, because as we laid the wire, the cable, we began to see these individuals in their striped outfits. Now I did notice at the time, but it never quite registered, the emblems that they wore, the patches that they wore which later indicated nationality, crimes, like being a Jew, or a gypsy, and things of that sort, or homosexual. Those were what the emblems represented.

I learned this later, but I did see them. They were dirty gray uniforms with different colored stripes. They may have been red or blue. I remember there were several different colors of stripes.

I guess the first ones we saw were just dead bodies on the road into the camp. Then as we approached the camp, we just

began to see people walking aimlessly down the road. They were all emaciated and mostly very emaciated and just walking aimlessly, not speaking.

I did try to talk to some of them, because I have a love for language. And some of them, they were Germans, they were French, they were Spanish, they were Russians, Yugoslavians. There were different nationalities.

I didn't quite understand, because we were not in a position to stand there and chat, when we finished our work, we had to load up and get back to our base, but it wasn't until two days later that we went in at the orders of our commanding officer.

What did you see when you went in?

Well, I guess the first thing that surprised me, it became clear to me that the various nationalities had organized themselves for self-government, had organized themselves into nationality organizations, so that the Russians were together, the French were together, the Spanish were together. Buchenwald was not an extermination camp, per se.

What would you say it was?

Well, it was more for political prisoners, German nationals who were political prisoners, but there were Jews there. What I say is-- well, for one thing, a mere-- and it sounds terrible to say this-- but a mere 50,000 were slaughtered in this camp. Well, this was not an extermination camp. This was the normal sort of things.

They organized the death of the prisoners when they wanted to. By the way, I understand later that Pastor Niemöller was in Buchenwald, but I don't know that as a fact. I think I read that years later.

I remember going into this large room, a nice, whitewashed room that had hooks on the wall. This was not a well-organized system of murder. They would tie the prisoners up and then beat them to death, if they weren't dead already, with large wooden clubs, a mallet that resembles what butchers use in meat grinders.

Did somebody tell you about that?

No, no, no, no, I saw this. No, no, nobody told me. I went into what was close to the part of the crematorium there. Then they had kind of gurneys, like medical gurneys.

What are gurneys?

They're little carts. It's a little cart for holding a body, and they were on tracks. There they began to be efficient. They put the bodies onto these carts that would hold one body, and they were on tracks, and it would go directly into the ovens. Then there was a whole series of ovens there.

Well, you said Buchenwald was not an extermination camp, and yet you saw ovens?

Yeah. This is a most-- forgive me-- this is a most inefficient way of destroying people. Again, this is from reading, not from personal experience with a organized slaughter by the thousands a day, and had quotas for destruction, and destroyed them in other ways.

This was a rather crude, inefficient way to do it. So that in the other concentration camps, again, from reading, people were destroyed by the tens of thousands, or thousands a day. Where here, 50,000 over years, while it's horrible to conceive of, is peanuts. They did have ovens, though, and I saw the bodies and skeletons in the ovens as well.

You actually saw that?

Oh, yes, yeah. As a matter of fact, people were continuing to die, because even though medical units would begin to move in by the time we got there, we went into the courtyard outside the crematorium-- and this is a very vivid memory-



- and they were bringing out bodies out of the--

Who is they?

--I think the prisoners, at that point, were bringing out the bodies, out of the barracks.

Out of the barracks?

Yeah. They were piling them. They were piling the bodies like cordwood, like six parallel, and then six across, and six, again, because they weren't going to burn them, at least I assume they weren't going to burn them. They had to get them out of the barracks because people were still in the barracks. They couldn't leave the dead bodies in the barracks. People were dying from the result of malnutrition and mistreatment.

Before you entered the camp, did you have any knowledge about what was happening from reading other sources at that particular time?

It's interesting. The only thing I had read before I went into the service was about Dachau, which was also at least an early on camp, because it was in Germany. I have the impression that the camps in Germany were used more for political and other kinds of prisoners, VIP prisoners, rather than the concentration camps whose main function was the destruction of people by the tens of thousands. They were located, again, from my reading, they were not located-- Dachau, Buchenwald were in Germany. Whereas the other camps for mass, mass destruction of people, Jews, were in Poland and outside of Germany.

What was your initial reaction when you entered the camp and saw this destruction?

Well, you get numb, numb. I mean, the sight of people, human beings, piled like pieces of wood several layers deep is unbelievable. The stench from the ovens, you could smell that outside the camp, and the stench is not unlike cooking meat.

Oh, one of the things I remember, the prisoners had begun to organize displays so that one of the more well-known murderers was Ilse Koch.

How do you spell that?

K-O-C-H. The first name was I-L-S-E. She became very prominent.

A woman?

A woman, yeah. She had a fancy for tattoos and would have the skin removed from prisoners after they were killed-- God help me-- I trust after they were killed. They had a display of lampshades and that was what became very well-publicized after the end of the war. I think she was tried.

I remember seeing a tattoo where you could see the nipples was taken off a man's chest, and you could see the nipples of his breasts, and the tattoo in between them. They had set up a display of her artwork, which consisted of human skin.

Where was that display?

It was within the camp. I don't remember which building, but I remember that very vividly. It was very well-known about lampshades, that she made lampshades, parchment of human skin.

How did you react to that when you saw that?

One, of numbness, it almost defies comprehension, and as I say, this was not an extermination camp, but they were killing people in wholesale quantities.

How did the other soldiers react?

That was interesting, because we were not the only soldiers, and you could usually tell the infantrymen, the dog faces they were called, guys who were much more used to living with death on an ongoing basis than we were in the Signal Corps. I remember seeing some of the infantrymen come in, it was a place where the bodies were being piled, and seeing these men just stand there in puke, just throw up. People used to living with death, maybe in a more violent form, but I remember very vividly. Whether it was one or more is lost in 40 years of memory, throwing up, just becoming ill at the sight of the mass destruction of human beings. As I say, the stench was horrible from the ovens. Horrible, as I say, you knew that you were smelling human flesh burning.

One of the things I remember is I went through what was laughingly called the hospital. The fact is I don't know why I wandered off, and there weren't many people with me. The hospital was a barracks, very much the same as the other barracks. It was empty, at the time, of people.

The only difference that the hospital had were what supposedly were blankets, and they were rags. I had a feeling there were burlap. I remember wading through several inches of these burlap rags in the hospital.

A few days later, and I don't remember exactly how much later, I came down with a thing called scabies, which is a louse, a mite, that bores under your skin. These are the kinds of things that you get under those circumstances. I just got it by walking through what was the hospital.

I remember very vividly, because, again, I was interested in language, the Spaniards had set up a display. I don't remember the Jews. It was more on nationality lines than the question of being Jewish and non-Jewish, because I suspect there were Jews among the various nationalities. I know there were Russians there and Yugoslavs.

They said, I thought it was kind of interesting, that the fight against fascism does not stop at the Pyrenees. These were very political people, is my point. I don't know how, God knows why people were selected for one camp as against another.

I had the impression this was used more to hold people than to slaughter them, though slaughter went on. That's the impression I have. A lot of this were impressions that I received after reading about it, after, as much as what I knew before.

So your unit did not actually liberate the camp? They had already been liberated at this point?

Well, I would expect, from what I understand, even by the time the American infantry, the first units got in, the Nazis, the camp guards had taken off. So that the people began to organize themselves. I guess I can't claim the title of liberator, because I wasn't an infantryman with an M1.

The Nazis took off, left the camp unguarded. The prisoners, in a sense, were thus liberated just by the advance of the American army. Then I'm sure there were probably infantrymen who came in first.

So how much time did you spend there?

Not a great deal, because having performed our function, which was to set up telephone communications, or provide what they called long lines, telephone communication for the camp, because hospital units moved in, all sorts of administrative units moved in, and just staying for two days until we left-- as a matter of fact, I was just curious enough to look when did we leave-- well, we didn't leave Weimar-- yeah, we left Weimar on the 19th.

Of?

We left Weimar almost immediately.

Of April?

April-- no May, May 19. We left my Weimar. We started to move-- unless they made a mistake, but I don't think so. Well, we moved to a place called Dossenheim. But as I recall, the kaserne, the camp, the permanent fort was outside. Well, maybe that was the fort, I suspect. I don't know camp bits that-- It's 197 miles difference.

So you spent how much time at Buchenwald?

Actually, just getting there for the day that we put the prisoners in, we put the wire in, the day that our commanding officer made us go. Then we stayed in the area at this fort near Weimar.

It's a little unclear to me from these records. Because we stayed there for some time. I came because I spoke Yiddish German. I'm trying to see if I can make sense of this. [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] and then [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] to Weimar.

Well, to get back to the camp, what was the reaction of the survivors to you? Did they try to speak to you? Did they try to get food? What were they doing, actually, those that were still alive?

Initially, yeah, the ones who were still alive, alive is a relative term. Some of them was just walking corpses. There wasn't a great deal of communication. I do think I remember speaking to some of the Spanish and some of the French survivors, which surprised me, because I did not know or assume that there was a multinational population.

Some of them had been soldiers. They were soldiers for some reason. Why they were being held in concentration camps, I don't know.

There wasn't a great deal of communication. In a sense, we were sent on a tour by our commander. Then we had to move out, because we then went to staff this camp, this permanent fort.

Was there any discussion after you left between the soldiers and the commanders? I think that, yeah, it made a profound difference. People, even the soldiers who did not have any sense of purpose in being in the army, I think, began to realize that there were some issues that maybe made this thing meaningful and worthwhile.

It was interesting, because I was put on-- because of my German, I became part of-- there were several units in this fort, and I was part of the permanent guard. Then I had some contact with some of the people who came by for food, came to the camp gates. We couldn't let them in, but we could give them rations and things of that sort.

Was there any food left in Buchenwald for the people?

I don't know. I don't know.

Did they have any direction? Did anybody try to help them in direction?

Well, all I know about that is what is from the history.

You didn't see anybody?

Not from personal experience, no. When we were in there, they were not yet organized. I understand later they put in medical units and all sorts of administrative units, but not at the time that I was there. They had not.

Did you have any contact at all with any German personnel or soldiers?

Not soldiers, German civilians in the camp.

In the camp?

In the camp.

Did you find any German records? Was anything found by your people?

No. As I say, our purpose initially was to establish communications, the system. The day we spent there was, in a sense, sounds horrible, but it was kind of sightseeing, if you can use that term.

Did you have any contact with people who lived in the vicinity, for instance, in Weimar?

Yeah. Yeah. That was very interesting.

And what was their conversation? What did they think about what was going on?

They didn't believe in the existence of the camp.

Did they not smell the odor?

Well, that, of course, you could smell the odor from the city. I do remember having conversation, but after a period of time, they made some of the city officials of Weimar go help bury the dead. Again, what I saw--

When you say they, who is they?

The American-- I understand the orders came directly from Eisenhower, but, again, I was a Private First Class. That's very low. They made some of the city officials come to the camp to bury the dead.

But you personally spoke to some of the citizens in the city?

Oh, I spoke to some the Germans because, again, the Germans, well, they were usually the wives of officers who wanted to get back into the camp and on guard duty. So you know, I was pretty angry. I would assault them, the horrible, horrible thing that they allowed to happen, and we didn't know what happened.

Of course, you could smell the stench of the ovens for quite a distance. You couldn't really miss it. The point is that they just refused to see it. They refused to be aware of it.

Did they have any attitude about the war, that they lost the war, that the war was going on?

Well, the attitude changed depending upon how convinced that they lost the war. Because I remember at other times being in Germany, we were in Germany early on near Aachen. Well, this was very early in the war. I was looking at this.

We were in Germany in September of '44, which was early on. Initially, the Germans were contrite. Now this was months before the Ardennes, where the Germans advanced and made us retreat.

I know that the people were acting contrite. Of course, you never found a Nazi. I was used frequently for translating. So that I can assure you that there never was a Nazi in Germany. None of them were Nazis, except the other guy.

They didn't admit to it. Is that what you're saying?

Not only that they didn't admit to it, if it would help them, they would accuse one another. If all the people who claimed that they had saved Jews had saved Jews, the Jewish population probably would have doubled to 12 million rather than having 6 million exterminated.

What was their attitude about Hitler?

Well, don't forget, we were the conquerors, so that by the time, denial. They were contrite, denial. Except, as I say, when we were in Germany at one point, and the Germans began to advance.

Well, the section of Germany, Aachen, which was the first where Americans penetrated, and as soon as the advance started, why they became nasty and defiant again. So my own feeling was their contrition was hollow, and I, for one, felt that their only sin that they felt was in losing.

So how long did you stay in Weimar?

I was trying to look that up before. I guess it was a couple of months.

And then you went elsewhere? Where did your unit go after that?

To Marseille, to Marseille, France, because we were then shipped to the Pacific. But I guess we were there a couple of months and then we were in the Marseille area for a while, and then boarded a ship, and we ended up in Okinawa in the Pacific.

In looking back, do you think that this particular experience affected your life?

Yeah, very much so. I have a favorite story. My son is an adult now, but I remember. I think fathers who had been in the war were prone to tell a lot of stories. My kids used to kid me about another story, a delightful one they called my pig story from Okinawa.

But I would tell my kids about the concentration camp. And my son said when do we forgive the Germans, because I personally feel, myself, I openly say I'm a revanchist.

A what?

Revanchist, I would want revenge. It's French. I said when I forget to tell you, and when you forget to tell your children, then maybe we can forgive the Germans. I have no use for the German people.

I've traveled a lot in the last years. I wouldn't go to Germany if they gave it to me. I get almost ill when I read, even in the Jewish news, Lufthansa tourists to beautiful Rhine. It really disturbs me very much.

That's what I mean by revanchist. I cannot be that forgiving, that people would allow themselves to be used and to descend to the level of allowing mass murder, and worse, to inflict it upon the Jews and other people were the subjects of this humiliation, torture, destruction. They bear responsibility for it. The Germans bear responsibility for it.

Do you talk about this situation very often?

I guess as one gets older, a little less, but yes, I've talked about it.

With whom, besides your children?

Well, in my work I have a number of people who are victims of the Holocaust, and I guess I've discussed it with them.

What made you decide to share your experience with us?

Even though, in a sense, it was a brief period of time, really very brief, it almost staggers the imagination, I may be repeating myself, that a nation of people, I'm talking about the Germans, could sit by, could close their eyes, could deny, could tacitly approve of the horrors that were undertaken by the government, and, in some cases, they participated in it. The government said yes, and they said no, they would have had difficulty. I guess this is the thing, that a whole nation could be corrupted to be party to this kind of horror.

That is the thing that I think leaves the greatest impression in my mind. You know, philosophically, I would not say you can corrupt a nation. Yet a nation was corrupted.

In your opinion, what would be an appropriate way to commemorate the Holocaust?

Well, I think what you're doing now is good. I would go to Germany to go back to Buchenwald or Dachau. But I wouldn't go back to Germany as a tourist to spend, just to give them my money and to drink their beer. I'd say sure, if people could be brought back, if generations of people could be reminded, and keep it fresh in people's memory, any method that would keep--

You mean, taking tours to the camps?

Whether it's touring the camp, or any means that would keep the memory alive, certainly in the new generations, I know people are trying to revise history, they didn't exist. They said the concentration camps didn't exist, But anything that could be done to make sure that the memory remains would be, I think, a useful kind of a tribute and a useful kind of memorial.

Do you have any thoughts about ensuring that this would never happen again?

The German people, before Hitler, were not a nation of beasts. It frightens me that a nation could be so corrupted, or cowed into accepting and participating in this bestial behavior so that, yeah, I think it can happen again.

I get very frightened by what I feel are-- well, the fact is that generally what I feel are the most fundamentalist preachers, the very right wing politicians, I think would easily say, hey, we don't like people. Therefore, let's get them out of the way. Let's destroy them.

First, you get them out of the way. Then you say, well, we don't have to feed them. They're not useful. Then you can destroy people as a solution, as a political solution.

So that yes, I believe it can happen. It can happen to Germans. It can happen to this country. It can happen in any country in my belief. People can be cowed, can be made to participate, and thus become a party to this.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us today?

No. I think I've done as much as I can. Thank you.

This is Sally Weinberg. Our Holocaust liberator today has been Harold Mailman. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Thank you very much, Mr. Mailman.

Thank you for the chance.