

Black OK

All right, let's continue with what happened at Ebensee.

Well, Ebensee is-- we has been taken over there, the Russian Army's advanced. And we have no variable who is advancing what because we are completely cut off from any communication, news, or anything. I mean, we just-- we just sense that if we has been taken more west, somethings must be happening. So that camp has-- April 9, 1945 has been evacuated. Excuse me.

And we went to Ebensee. At that time, it was about-- my understanding on the day of the liberation, close to 76,000 or 77,000 people has been together down at camp, what is about a basically the inmate between 10,000 and 11,000 in normal condition-- so-called normal condition. There's probably a little bit more often in our camp because the mines was-- they have to be drilled in a stone.

No food, the execution was daily there, it was in a called Schonungblock. The Schonungblock where is the people who not able to move any longer, though as-- there's living vegetables. There's some reason I crawled out of that barracks. And I went to the other barracks in a-- late fall down. And I can't walk any longer. I practically crawled.

If I recalled correctly-- the 7th, the 6th-- is the 5th of May. It was 1945. I think it was Friday. And around 6 o'clock in the evening, I saw outside in the camp, with all the people, is-- the SS is burning some papers. What kind of papers, we don't know. For the truth of the record, I have to go-- also mentioned, outside of this concentration camp in Ebensee was a SS training camp.

The large amount of paper burning and-- I mean, this was Friday. And Saturday, around 11 o'clock, our LagerfÃ¼hrer, Ludolf, and the Ebensee LagerfÃ¼hrer, they ask-- they told us that Americans-- American Army is advancing. And who wants to be hide away from them? I mean, the people who has the strength that's left about it. I mean, it's-- we have no reason to be hide away from the American Army.

We also found out, they want to really-- what, three and a half or-- well, total 27 kilometer of tunnels in the mountains, they want to packed in these people and dynamited the exit so it's no trace should be left for was a camp there. But I think they just practically ran out of the time.

So it's a Sunday afternoon around 2:00, 2:30, the first American military truck came in with a mount and machine gun. I cannot tell you the joy, the happiness, sorrow what is crossed for me and also what I seen on other peoples' face. They give us medical aid, food, put me in person in a quarantine. They forbidden to drinking any water because wasn't sure they was poisoned or not.

And lot of people, even after get liberated, is--

Died.

--died, overeating. After the quarantine and medical care, I went back to Hungary. And prior to that, the many, many times crossed my mind, I should go back or not.

Well, I think we are just all of us as human, doesn't matter what's the condition, that somehow, somewhere, someplace is-- something is left inside, even if we know the truth. But some hope, unrealistic hope, because I thought it so many times back, it's-- maybe is not happen what I saw. Maybe is not true. Maybe I just-- I don't said to myself, I dreaming.

So I decided to go back. And just like many misfortunes happened to me in my life, when I get liberated, there's many other people. We threw our striped prisoner uniform.

So I happened to grab some German uniform. I took all ranking off. So when we crossed to Czechoslovakia, the Czech partisans came, they want to execute me. They thought I'm a German soldier who escaped and just take off the-- it's a

good thing some other Russians, and Polish, and Czech prisoner guy don't speak Czechs. They explain-- they save me.

When I arrived in Budapest, I think it's-- I have run into the second conflict. They don't believe me I'm a Jew. But I run in the first conflict in Auschwitz on the first day when I arrived-- because I don't speak Yiddish, they don't believe that I'm a Jew. So I-- for some reason, I always get the short end of the.

And I went back to our hometown, Nagykanizsa. The train is arrived. It was a freight train, as I should-- don't call it a regular train, freight train-- around 3:30, 4 o'clock in the morning. And we lived about a good two and a half, three miles away from where our house, from the train station.

And I took normal summer night space walk, comfortable. I think normally, I did this thing, with my age, by about 45 minutes to the hour, for real comfortable. The closer I get to the house, the slower I walked. But I know it. I have the hope.

But once I walk into that house, is all hope is gone. And one side of me want to see, maybe the hope existing. And other side of me don't want to face the hope and don't want to face the reality. Closer I get, slower I walked.

I should say, about 6:30 in the morning, when I arrived to our house. The house is occupied by some well-known Hungarian fascist who has iron for our-- my parents' lumber business. In a back yard, the Russian Army. I can't blame him, they turned to be a bakery, baking. They don't know who I am. There's no way to communicate with them.

So we have some little garden in the back with a walnut tree and a bench. And I was exhausted. I just belong, I think, is my jacket. I just folded, and put it on in my head, and lay down.

Around 8 o'clock, our next-door neighbor, who has a son is my age, nice people, come with the son. I was still sleeping and drowsing. And she's got a glass of milk on her hand. And she started calling my name, and start shaking. And she says, where's your mom? And the first time I broke down.

And I don't think is that much of a question is where my mother was bothering me. I thought to myself, I mean, you asking me something? Don't you know? I took it granted that person should know what happened.

The question is kind of a-- I mean, I thought, this is hypocritical question. You don't know nothing? You're not aware of what was happen to me, or this city, or these people? Why you asking me this question? I don't told her anything. I'm just saying it--

Thinking it.

--to myself. And I realized that I'm injustice-- I'm not fair to her. Well, how she should know? I don't know that, what's happening to me when I was there.

And I stayed with the local Joint. Out of the 3,200 Jews is 137 came back. And I think I told you, in the first dinner, I bump into my music teacher, whose father the first day. And I decided, after a couple of weeks, well, everything was strange to me. I better go back to the village where I--

Was born.

--born. Is the summertime. There is no scheduled train, nothing. And I-- the train don't stopped in that village. That was-- right after the war, the conductor says, they're not going to be stopped. You got to-- either before or after, so you choose which is closer.

So I get up what is closer. But some-- must be some young kids saw me, about around 6:30 in the evening, 7 o'clock. Those people is still out in the field in summertime. And I'm walking towards the village.

And all of a sudden, in a tower bell is ringing that those-- you have to be know to the custom. Is there two towers in that

village-- one is the daily what is using for the 5 o'clock in the morning and using it for lunch time, 12 o'clock. And the small bell, if it's some danger-- fire, tornado, or hail.

And a small bell is ringing. And the people see the sky. That's when it-- they don't know what is it. They thought it was a fire. They spread the rumors, I came back. And the whole village came home from the field.

And they have the same repeating question. I think I cried a lot. I was not-- I was only 16 or turned to be 16. And I have to be-- eat every day a different house.

Different house?

They don't know what to do. The people was simple, but I think even today was honest, sincere. The repeating question they have always how could be someone do anything like this? I have just as no answer for them and--

We are asking that question too.

And they don't have the answer.

OK. How did you get back into the American zone? And get to America?

I don't went back. I stayed in Hungary. I learn a trade. I have a aunt who lived in Paris. And the irony of the life, she and her husband survive in Berlin during the war. She came back to Hungary. And I didn't expect it to even-- she's alive. And she found me.

She gave me a good advice. She says, here, you could be a attorney, and doctor, or lawyer, or an engineer. When you go to the abroad, if you have a trade, you don't have to be speak the language. You could work with your hands.

So take my word. We lived in Paris 25 years. You don't believe it how many engineers, and doctors, and attorney we saw in restaurant is washing dishes. If you have a trade, you will somehow make it.

I wasn't totally happy about it, but I learned a trade-- plumbing and sheet metal. And I has been called in the army. I was-- went through the printer school. When the time I discharged from the army, everything is nationalized. There's no more private business no more.

The communists had taken over already.

Yes. Yes. The revolution come 1956. I always involved with people who is the literate circle, theater. That Imre Nagy who has been executed, I was with him in the parliament that day. I know, it's nothing to do with this record.

The revolution broke out. Far before, I decided, I will go west. And we came-- went to Vienna. I really have no desire to go any farther than Vienna.

But a friend of mine told me, said, well, why don't you go to United States? You have a better chance. And I applied November 27, 1956. And I arrived in New Jersey December 5.

Oh, that was pretty good.

Very fast. I don't think I know the difference between yes and no. In New York, they told me, if you want to go to Cleveland? I said, even, what's the difference where I am? I don't know nothing.

Who told you? HIAS, you said, or Joint?

HIAS told me, the HIAS.

HIAS. Where did you meet your wife?

In Hungary.

And she went with you too?

Yes, she-- yeah.

I see.

She is not a survivor, you said.

No. No.

OK. What did you-- how did you get settled in the community?

Well, I mean-- United States, that's what you--

In Cleveland, I mean.

In Cleveland. Well, I has been brought here. The Family Service set me up.

I see.

Rent the apartment. And I can't say anything. It was very nice to me. I ran into some conflict with some so-called social worker who called himself a social worker. And I don't know is relevant to this tape or not, but I better tell you that if you want to remain the truth.

It was-- I think it was a Jewish vocational service in an arcade in downtown that time. I never forget the gentleman name. And I was only 27, he about probably 36-38. I have a translator. And they asked me, what is my occupation in Hungary, such and such. So I told him.

He said, we have a job for you in a paper-- a cardboard box factory. The job pays \$4.25 an hour. But I don't know the difference, says, what is this? I says to the translator, why don't you ask him if he has any job in as a plumber or sheet metal man?

And the man-- I knew it right away, he's not exactly the most qualified social worker. He don't understand the immigrant mind. He says, tell him, he don't speak English. So I have a lot of guts and courage to tell the interpreter-- I mean, the translator, tell him, I don't speak English in a cardboard box factory either. And I don't know-- I never made a cardboard box. But I know how to work with plumbing and sheet metal.

And I think we instantly disliked each other. But he don't liked my pinpoint. And he says, well, you better find yourself a job. And he did me a favor. I found myself a job for \$2.

OK. OK.

You wanted, I summarize it for one thing about-- if you-- in my own way.

OK.

I know, maybe historically, is only interested in my personal experience. I like to be summarized. This matter is not a Jewish matter, it's a human matter. I try point it out to my friends, my Jewish, my non-Jewish friends, is the human tragedy.

I think I told you on the telephone. The other five million non-Jews that died concentration camps-- we're not talking about the two million Russian prisoners, the army prisoners, five million non-Jews who was against tyranny--

Against Hitler.

--fascism. And I think, I say to myself, I go back-- not frequently, but I go back very often to visit these places, pay tribute to those fellow men who don't make it to come back.

And I would like to be see and warn the human-- mankind. Please, guard it very carefully your freedom or democracy. I don't think anyone could be possibly more value personal freedom than I do.

It's a good message.

And this for Jews and Christians, Black and white, yellow or green, or whatever is any time, when any of this race or religion is in trouble, and if we think it's good enough because it's not happened to us, we are in trouble. Please, if you fellow man is in trouble, even if not you personally, stand up for it.

OK, very good.

It's the only thing I could say.

Thank you very much. It was a very fine interview. I think we have a couple of minutes yet. Do you have-- do you want to show the two cards? And explain them.

I think one time one point of the interview, I said, how was misleading this-- the public, how was misleded by the Nazi propaganda.

They were deceitful and lying is what it was.

And I just want to prove to you and someday, my period of time of life, I hopefully turn it over to the--

Archives.

--archive or some documentation center, where could be used in a future reference for-- and hopefully, all of us learn from it. The simple matter, two postcard. This postcard is stamped 1943, December 7, to address to one of my uncle.

It's my father handwriting. And 1944, May 20, this different postcard, also addressed to the same uncle, to Budapest-- well, I don't think you need to be any--

This is supposedly your father's handwriting too?

Also.

I don't think you need to be any expert on handwriting to be knowing it, this is not a two same person handwriting. Is coming from--

This looks like a child almost.

Right. Is the date, birthdate, is correct-- 1902, February 19. And is also censored, it's said in German and Hungarian. And say Waldsee is nonexistent place, to such a name Waldsee someplace in a German and Swiss border--

Sort of resort.

--sort of resort. The purpose of this postcard is nothing else, just getting-- receiving postcard to calm down.

Everything-- it says, everything's all right.

Everything is OK, right. It say-- yeah. Well, that's in German, says, [GERMAN] So I'm well and kissing--

Kisses to everyone.

--the whole family. Maybe the value is no value for this one, just historical value for me. And I-- hopefully, it's going to be historical value the whole interview for the future generation.

I hope so too.

And I-- hopefully, the mankind-- what I have a second doubt about my own mind is I never learned anything about this one. Because we're going through periodical-- today is Jews, tomorrow is someone else. You look at in Belfast, the Catholics and Protestants, Protestants and Catholics. I think the mankind have certain animalistic instinct, this always wants to be kill.

Our technology in the last 15 years is more advanced in our one-to-one human cooperation, friendliness. I don't think the last 10,000 years, we learn to be-- how to be nice to each other. When I'm trying to tell you, our technology is so fast advancing.

But our human relations are not.

But our human relation--

Are not.

--is so far set back, is frightening.

It is frightening. But thank you again.

Yes. Thank you.