

The following is an interview of Dr. Tibor Vince. It is taking place on March 11th, 1996 in Bethesda, Maryland, and is being conducted by Gail Schwartz. Could you give us your full name?

Tibor Vince.

And where were you born?

Budapest, Hungary.

And when were you born?

March 13, 1910.

Let's talk a little bit about your childhood. Who made up your family? Who were the members of your family?

My father and mother, my brother and I.

What was your father's name?

[PERSONAL NAME], which is the equivalent of William.

And what kind of work did he do?

He was actually in the army for the longest time. And then--

He was a career--

He was a career army man. He was stationed in Vienna where he met my mother. They got married in 1902. Possibly he was transferred to Hungary because my brother was born about a year after they were married, but born already in Budapest, Hungary.

And from then on, he was still in the army for the longest time. The only thing I remember as a young child that he had the longest sword I ever have seen, and I usually fell [? with the sword ?] walking with him.

You would go out on walks with him, and he would carry his sword.

Yes. Yeah, I would-- this was before the war and during the First World War. And of course, in inter war, he was not in the army. And during the First World War, he was back in the army again.

What did he do between-- before the war?

He did some kind of a business. I don't-- he was--

Business man.

He was in some kind of a business. Not too successful either, I don't think.

What about your mother's family? Where were they from?

My mother is-- was born in the northern part of Hungary.

Mm-hmm.

And her father was a farmer. She had-- there were eight sisters.

Your mother's name?

My mother's name, Laure, L-A-U-R-E. And my mother was--

Her maiden name?

Quastler-- Q-U-A-- Q-U-A-S-T-L-E-R. And when my mother was four years old, her mother died. And the youngest sibling was just about four months old. And the oldest sister, who was already married, lived in Vienna. And after the mother died, the last three youngest, she brought them up.

And that's how-- [? Hermia ?] was the youngest, about four months, mother, two years old, and Regina was four. And they all grew up with tante Maria, which was the name of the oldest sister, in Vienna. And that's where she met my father and they got married.

My grandfather married again and had 10 more children. Possibly because people were needed on the farm, unless there are other reasons for this, which escapes me at the present time. That's my mother's family.

Did you live right in Budapest itself? Did you live in the town when you were growing up?

We lived in Budapest proper.

Uh-huh.

Yeah.

Did you live in a house?

Yes, we lived in a house. As a matter of fact, the area where we lived was a military compound, military hospitals, military artillery station. A great many of the military installations were we lived, possibly because my father's association, previous association. And I grew up there, very quietly.

What about your schooling?

My schooling, in Hungary after the fourth year of elementary school, you have eight years of what they call gymnasium prior to entering into universities for university study, which was a very maybe interesting experience. Because in eight years' time, you had eight years of German, eight years of Latin, four years for Greek, and four years of French.

And you were quite miserable. You went to school from 8:00 to 5:00 every day and Saturday til noon, and had a relatively short summer vacation. But we did get a good education.

You were speaking Hungarian at home?

Actually, my first language was-- my mother and father talked German with each other for two reasons. One of them, they spoke [? actually ?] Hungarian, because they were Hungarian. But that was-- when I was born, it was under the also Hungarian monarchy.

And the language of German was a very important asset for everybody to know. So while we spoke at home German, we spoke Hungarian everywhere else and with everybody else.

As a matter of fact, my father's job in Vienna was-- he was assigned at the time when they got married, to the military tribunal because he was trilingual. He had perfect command of German, Hungarian, and Slav. And most of the Elsa Hungarian Empire, maybe judicially, affairs were handled in Vienna. And they needed somebody who knew three

languages at least. So we were always very language minded.

What kind of neighborhood was it? Was it a middle class?

It was mostly-- it was the outskirts of-- I believe it was the 6th district, if I remember correctly. It called the Land of Angels, literally translated-- [NON-ENGLISH]. I don't forget it that completely.

It was a lot of army installations, but it was primarily the outskirts of the city, within the city limits, yes.

You said the first four grades, did you go to public school?

Yeah, we went through public school boys all the way through.

With boys and girls together?

Beg your pardon?

Boys and girls together?

No, just boys separate--

Separately.

--and girls separate. As a matter of fact, even any education girls were separate than boys. The first time I met girls in school was when we were at the university.

Did you have any hobbies as a young child? Any other interests besides school when you were growing up?

My interests besides school were-- you mean, besides girls?

I'm talking about before university. I'm talking about--

I was quite a good soccer player. And I was a very good skier. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons why I choose to go to Turin-- to Torino, which is at the foothills of the Alps, it was a beautiful place to ski practically all year around.

But when you were in gymnasium, you also did skiing? You did it as a younger--

Ice skating.

Ice skating.

And later on, I mostly-- there were not to much facilities in Hungary to ski. But all the facilities to ski was in Turin.

Did you read a lot as a child? Were you interested in books?

Read? Yes, I was reading. When I was a child, I didn't hardly have anything else, but books. There was no radio, or television, or anything else. As a matter of fact, I remember I was a young teenager when I built my first radio. I made my own radio receiver. I must have been about 14 or 15.

As a matter of fact, I started to-- just like in ancient times, I remember when the electricity was brought to our house. I first studied-- I studied by kerosene lamps. I never-- I forgot that. And it was very, very nice and very difficult.

When you go to school in Hungary, where there is-- I mean in gymnasium, of classical gymnasium they call it. The real gymnasium, they call it [INAUDIBLE] real gymnasium. But math teachers and engineers went. And the classical

element, where Latin and Greek was taught, they usually became physicians, lawyers, or teachers of the languages. But it was a long-- we didn't have too much time to have hobbies. We all played a great deal of soccer when we had time, but we didn't have time to do much.

Did--

It was a difficult life.

Did you belong to any youth groups?

No. There were no youth groups there. I don't remember any youth groups.

No boys groups.

I don't remember any groups. First of all, we're so busy just studying that we were happy to survive.

What about music and art?

I played piano for early life. We all started about eight, nine years of age.

Your family had a piano in your house?

Yeah.

Was your family a very close family?

Very. As a matter of fact, the sisters who grew up in Vienna after mother and dad moved into this part of Hungary, they all followed them. And all four of them lived in the same-- all the eight sisters-- of course, some of them stayed in Vienna, some of them [INAUDIBLE], but the four youngest, they all stayed in the same area or a block of maybe five or six blocks. And, of course, there were a lot of nephews, and cousins, and what have you.

So would you get together at holiday times?

Oh, yeah. We would-- it was family-oriented existence, families-- well, it was a large family and we sometimes-- as a matter of fact, we were quite close.

And your brother, did you have a close relationship with your brother?

Yes.

He was eight years older--

He was eight years older, yeah.

--than you.

He was considerably older than and I. Eight years is a long time. And my father's side, there were five children. Quite a number of doctors among them. The oldest cousin was a physician and possibly influenced a great many of the younger ones. I was the youngest. And in an area where most of the population did not get not even high school educations in those days. There were not too many college educated people.

Why did you say life was hard?

Life was hard because we were in school 10, 12 days-- 10, 12 hours a day, weeks, and months, and months, and months.

It was-- besides studying and comply with these studies, you had very little time for anything else. It was a tough schooling. And that's what I say [INAUDIBLE].

That's what you mean.

We didn't think of that, that it was hard. We didn't know that there was any other existence either. Now, comparison, I can see that that was really an animal, but when we were there, we just did it because everybody else-- not everybody-- those who went to school did it. But of course, when you're finished high school, you automatically became a gentleman-- an officer and a gentleman.

I don't know if I ever taught you that, that any high school graduate, when they went into the army, they went-- a special insignia on the arm. They went in to direct-- they became officers in the army, not if they stayed long enough. It was compulsory, military service, at the age of maybe 18 or thereabouts. And then you stayed in the service until you-- in the reserve until you are 65.

You said your father was in the military. Was he a strict disciplinarian?

I don't remember that.

You don't remember him being--

I think that we had quite a warm family--

Family life.

We never-- I don't remember any difficulties within the family.

Did you have any kind of religious training growing up?

No.

No religious training.

Not to speak of. Not to speak of. We were just a happy, simple family. I'm still the same.

So you didn't go to Sunday school as a child?

No.

Or belong-- go to services.

There was no compulsory schooling there.

Did you have religious training in your-- did you have any religious training in your school itself?

No.

Weekly training?

No, they were already just teaching in schools.

OK, well now you've gone through the gymnasium, and now you are--

I beg your pardon?

You finished your high school, your--

I finished my high school. And then I went further to become teachers. We got a teacher's diploma. With that kind of education, you needed not too much, I believe a year or so, and you get a teacher's diploma.

Was this at a different school? You went to a different school?

Yes.

A teacher's--

A teacher's--

A college type of thing.

Like a college equivalent.

And was this--

The two of us-- there were three of us very close. All three of us were Tibors. One young man, one Tibor, he was a very, very talented painter at an early age. The other one was-- became a correspondent of one of the biggest newspapers while in high school and his college study. And I had no talent whatsoever. So I just studied. But the three of us decided to go to Paris after we finished.

This is what? 1928-29?

'29.

The three young men decide to go to Paris.

The three of us. And we lived together. I enrolled at Sorbonne, thinking that I'd become a medic or a physician, because I had no talent to be a painter or a writer.

Did you think when you were a young child that you would be a physician? Was this something that you had thought of growing up?

I always wanted to be a physician.

Why?

Possibly because my oldest cousin was my role model, who-- Victor was a really a wonderful guy. And quite a number of us, because Victor became a physician, we became physicians too. But actually, I did not have any talent, special talent. And we lived together, which was very nice.

But as I mentioned, [?we are speaking?] to a friend of mine, the painter, met a young lady who moved in with him. And when she moved in with him, well, we had to move out. And I just left and went to Italy. So that was the end of my--

Why did you go to Italy?

First of all, I wanted to ski. Secondly, I get a scholarship there where I just paid 50% of the tuition. And I think it was a very nice invitation to get there.

How is it that you got this scholarship?

Bet your pardon?

How did it come about that you got the scholarship?

I don't remember, but they were encouraged-- they were encouraging foreigners to go to Italy to study. And either it was automatic or you needed a certain grade, but I do not know. That well under Mussolini, who wanted to improve opportune-- not improve, just to get people in. And we paid automatically just 50% of the tuition, which was a tremendous help.

Was your father supporting you for that?

Oh, yes.

He was agreeable to that.

Oh, yes, oh, yes. We were-- by that time, I was pretty independent. But of course, my parents subsidized my medical studies, of course.

And we're in Italy did you go to?

Beg your pardon?

Where in Italy did you go?

Turin-- Torino, Italy. I had a beautiful six, seven and a half, almost seven years there. Because after the six years you have a I believe a six months practical hospital experience. And then you take a state board. At least 100 miles away where you studied, so there would not be any-- to eliminate the possible-- the possible of favoritism, you went about 100 miles away. There were about six of us.

Was medical school difficult for you?

No, I don't remember. I was rather a good student. As a matter of fact, the last three years of my medical school in Italy, in Turin-- top 10% of student that got university jobs when they were interns, as student interns. And I got a job in the infectious disease hospital. And I had a very beautiful three years there. And just brings back memories.

I went to Sienna to take my state board. And there were about six of us who went to Sienna. I don't know why to Sienna. Possibly I went to Sienna because the other people went to. And they were-- and one of my classmates who went to Sienna with me was Rita Levi-Montalcini, who won a Nobel Prize just about five, six years ago.

And the other one was-- I don't think he came with us. He might have been a year ahead-- Salvatore Luria, who at the present time is professor of MIT of biology. And a Nobel Prize winner. He was in the class before me. I met him once or twice in New York after the war. And then we lost contact.

I don't even know why I remember these things.

It's wonderful.

The Royal University of Turin, yeah.

The name of your medical school was what? The official--

Royal University of Turin-- [ITALIAN], translated into English.

And you spoke fluent Italian when you went there?

Not before I went there, I didn't. As a matter of fact, the only thing I knew when I decided to go to Italy to study was [ITALIAN]. And that's about but it means. I want to go to Turin. And they were very nice. On the train when we went to get over, and I was in Turin. And they took me to-- as a matter of fact, they took me to a hotel which was not too far from the railroad station.

And I had two or three people that I knew, who I corresponded with before. As a matter of fact, a six-- a last year student who was Hungarian, arranged my entry into the university. So there were two or three friends of mine. But Italian, I didn't know. But at that time, I learned the language in about two or three months.

Because the classes were taught in Italian?

Oh, yes.

Yes. So you had to learn it quickly.

And I had no difficulty taking examinations. It took-- it took maybe about three months to learn, to be able to function. After that, it was easy. No problems.

Would you characterize your training is rigorous training?

Yes, it was an excellent training. It was a relatively short, small class. I think the whole University of Turin had no more than about 150 people. It was a very good standing university, one of the top in Italy, at least they considered it one of the top.

Their university-- it's interestingly enough, in Italy in those days, you could go from one university to the other one whenever you wanted to. And sometimes some of these fellows decided to go from one place to another one, because the other one was easier the second year. Then came back for the third year.

No, Turin was a-- the University of Torino was a very good school and gave an excellent examination.

Did you have a lot of personal contact with the patients? Or was it mostly--

Well, I lived in a hospital for three years. We took care of patients.

So you had a lot of contact.

We had a lot of contact.

Personal contact.

We had a lot of personal contact with [INAUDIBLE].

With real people.

Which was very tragic in one way, because part of the infectious disease hospital contained a tuberculosis sanitarium. And so many of these people coming from the [? ARBs ?] to the city to working, to work there, because if they were not exposed before to TB, they came down with a form of any type of tuberculosis. And many of them died. Young, beautiful women dying of TB. This was an era which--

So you were then learning to live with people who looked weak and ill.

We lived in the university and then attended classes. For that, we got a small stipend, I believe, and certainly room and



board and laundry. And the good nuns wanted to fatten me up, because I was so skinny. Oh, God. But that's a long time ago.

Then you said you finished the six years. And did your additional year.

When I finished in Turin, I went to Milan, and I got a job at the university there.

At a hospital?

At university-- university medical school.

Medical school.

We were instructors. I was instructor in medicine. And a very good friend of mine, Antonio Spinelli, was instructor of surgery. And the two of us opened up a medical research laboratory. The stipend for university people is very low. So most of them had to have some outside income.

And our job was primarily to diagnose venereal diseases. At that time, was quite rampant. And that's how I got to Cuba. One of the patients of ours was the consul, one of the consuls. I don't want to mention names.

So you were a year in Milan?

Actually, I was-- I wanted to get out of Europe.

Why?

Well, just before I left, I mentioned to you that I went back to visit to mother in July in 1938. And at the pass-- at the border of the train when I got to Hungary, they took my passport away. And they told me to join my regiment, that I was assigned to the First Hungarian Border Guards.

And I was in the army for four months. That was a time of Sudetenland and so on. As a matter of fact, possibly I would be still in somewhere there. My friend, who was a partner, was able to obtain a request from the University of Milan to the Hungarian government to give me a two week leave of absence so I can finish my research work. I went back to Italy and I never went back to Hungary.

You never went back.

I never went back to Hungary. And that's where the Cuban fellow gave me a passport. I went to Cuba. Chances are, if I would have had a patient somewhere else, I would have ended up somewhere else. I wanted to get out of Europe.

What did you know about Hitler at that time? What were your thoughts?

Well we know, we knew about Hitler. The only thing we knew about the war, that Sudetenland was taken over. And it was a totally abnormal atmosphere.

Abnormal?

Abnormal atmosphere, and young people, especially who lived a life abroad. I was not any more Hungarian when I lived in Italy. I loved where I lived. I wanted to stay there. And to go back again to the Hungarian life, it would have been stepping back 100 years or so. That [? was an odd ?] feeling, at that point.

Did you know anything about Hitler's restrictions in Germany? The Nuremberg Laws?

We didn't know too much about it, but it was a war. Going to happen a war. A war was imminent. Everybody was

talking about a war. And I don't think that any of us liked the war. Anyway, I just left because I didn't want to be in the war. So I left. I never went back again either.

What were your duties during those four months that you were in the army?

I was in the infantry. That was a, as I mentioned, the First Hungarian Border Guard. It was an elite group. It was supposed to guard the borders of Hungary. It was very vigorous exercises and training. And they were possibly alerting the Hungarian army. And I did not know these things. I wouldn't have gone back the first place.

I didn't expect to have my passport taken away and put in the army for four months, not at a time when I was around nine years from Hungary, or eight years, anyway. It's a long story.

OK, and then you-- as you say, you went back and this consul--

I went to went-- very shortly after that, went to Cuba. And I get a job at the hospital Mercedes, which is university hospital. And then--

What kind of work did you do there?

I was teaching hematology.

What city in Cuba where you in?

In Havana. And everybody, half a dozen of us there, were friends. And went-- wanted to get out of Cuba. We were on our way to Australia, where one of the men who was with us had an uncle. You know, it's very easy, you made decisions just on almost hearsay. Not too much substantial studies.

But anyway, we were on our way. We were already in Havana. And then we were on our way to Australia when the war broke out, September 1st.

What were your feelings when you heard that the war had broken out?

Well, it was a very disturbing thing. Very disturbing thing. Because first of all, I did not get it a passport-- I did not get a visa to Australia as an enemy alien. I was a Hungarian citizen. So that's one of the-- that's the reason why I couldn't go to Australia. And of course--

Because Hungary was an ally of Germany, you couldn't.

Yes, correct. And so I came into the United States.

How easy was that to do?

Actually, I don't remember it too clearly, but somebody had also somebody who was a chemist in New York. I don't know what his name was. And he sponsored us to come to United States.

You keep saying us. Was this a big group?

Well, I came by myself. But he sponsored as many as he could. There were six of us who were in Havana on the way to Australia. And about four of them already left.

Were these Hungarians?

They were Hungarians.

All Hungarians?

Yes. And they were always-- as a matter of fact, the four of them already went to Australia. One of them we heard about, who came back to visit Claude in Milan from Australia. Anyway, the other left for Australia.

And a couple of us, somehow, I have no idea, possibly the other fellow will know it, got our-- they sponsored us to come to the United States. My problem was that when I came to the United States, this man was transferred from New York to Chicago.

Did you ever get your passport back? You said it was taken away.

I don't think that I got a-- I got a passport to leave, yes. I get a passport with a restriction. But in Cuba, the American government gave me a-- not that passport, but-- I didn't have a passport when I came into United States.

This is tape one, side B. You were talking about coming to the United States from Cuba. And that you had a passport with a restriction.

To leave Hungary.

To leave Hungary.

Yeah, but actually, the consul in Havana gave me a statement instead of-- because I couldn't-- I didn't have a passport to-- I got a statement to enter United States. I still have it somewhere, I don't know.

And it wasn't difficult then for you at that time to--

At the time, no, because of the war--

This is September 1939.

Before or because of the war, there was no immigration from Europe. So many of these quotas opened up. Hungary might have had a quota for, let's say, 50,000 Hungarians. And suddenly, by being in war, people were not getting permits in Hungary, but a Hungarian could get an entry, a legal entry to the United States, because there were few people who were applying for it.

So you settled-- where did you settle in New York when you got there?

Where did I study?

Settled, where did you live?

Well, that's a story. I did not-- I spent a few days in Florida. And then I decided to come to New York by bus. And fortunately, a person sitting next to me in the bus spoke Spanish, because I didn't speak English.

And he told me that he has a sister in Sheepshead Bay who rents rooms. So that was wonderful. I arrived to Times Square, get out of the bus. I have the address. And there were taxi drivers there. And I showed them one. And three or four of those little people started to ask me-- tell me something.

Well, I talked to them Hungarian, talked to them German, Spanish, French, Italian. But this fellows didn't speak any of these languages. They just did not. And they couldn't-- I couldn't understand what they were saying. And I didn't understand what I was saying. But finally, one little guy, one of the taxi drivers tapped on my shoulder, waved at me to get into his taxi.

Soon as he get into the taxi, he put the meter down. I said, oh, my God. Am I going get something? I had no idea where

Sheepshead Bay was. So after about 40 or 45 minutes from Times Square, we arrived to Sheepshead Bay. By that time I was wondering whether my limited finances will pay for the trip.

But this little guy was talking very animatedly. And I get out of the car, possibly quite beaten. With a big smile, tapped me on my shoulder. Shook my hand. Didn't accept any money. And off he went. I have been paying back taxi drivers ever since.

Did you have any communication with your parents while you were in Cuba?

No. We had-- I don't think I told you-- when I left Hungary-- when I left Hungary, my brother joined me. And he came with me to Cuba.

To Cuba.

Hoping that getting out of the war he brings his family. There was a wife and a daughter. We'll bring our family out of Europe. It was a chaotic situation.

Was he a physician also?

No, he was a businessman. But the war-- when the war broke out, September 1st, he realized that he could not possibly bring his family out. So he went back to Hungary. And he-- no, I did not-- I had some communication from Europe, but not much.

Yes, I did, yes I did. As a matter of fact, I know very well that I did. I was-- I didn't live in-- stayed in Sheepshead Bay too long. I came to New York in early '76 or thereabouts, just next to Central Park on one side. On the other side of Central Park was a WPA run YMCA.

And I spent from morning till night taking English lessons. And worked very hard of English. Anyway, in six months time, I was able to get an internship because my English was proficient enough. And I got an internship at the Evangelical Deaconess Hospital in Brooklyn on Chauncey Street.

And I will had an internship there and a residency there in obstetrics. And as a matter of fact, that were the time when as much as I was a legal immigrant, they drafted me to the army. Not only citizen, but legal immigrants were also drafted. But the hospital get an extension because so many of the residents and intern staff were called into the service that they were just very few of us.

And they asked for an extension for me until they are able to replace me with somebody else. And in that period of time, they passed a law that physicians who are not American citizens cannot be drafted in the army as private, unless they are citizens. In that case, they can go to the army as commissioned officer. So they can be used as physicians, not as orderlies or what have you, in medical units.

And I wasn't a citizen. So after two years in the Deaconess Hospital, I had one year at the-- another the year at the Queens General Hospital in Queens on obstetrics. I had a residency there. And I came up-- got acquainted with one local physician who needed obstetrical help. And I went down and helped him out from the hospital.

As a matter of fact, my chief sent me down to help some local physician in Queens who had some difficulty with a delivery, to help him out. And while we were waiting the woman to deliver, he asked me, well, what do I do in the hospital. I said, well, I'm a resident.

He said, well, how do you much you make. Sure, I get \$30 a month, sure. And he said, well, what are your hours? I said, well I'm 24 hours on and 24 hours off. He said how would you like to work for me when you are out off? I said, my God, why not? Absolutely.

He said, would you consider \$300 a month as a adequate compensation? I said, yes, without any doubt. And for a few

months, I worked with him. And then in the following year, which was 1944-- yes-- at the beginning of the year, I got my citizenship.

And when I get my citizenship, I applied for a commission. I got a commission after we were married or before? After. In the hospital I delivered that helped that woman-- that helped that doctor-- or helped the doctor out to deliver the difficult patient, with hydrocephalus, I met my wife, who was an obstetrical nurse, in January, I believed, didn't I? In March, we were married. In May, I was in the army.

OK before we get to-- continue with that, did you know what was happening in Europe in '41, '42, '43?

Very scanty information. Hardly any. It was very poor information. I really didn't know just what was going on. I didn't know then. I remember one episode very clearly, where the-- when Pearl Harbor was bombed--

'41.

It was a Sunday afternoon. Jim O'Leary and I were doing a cesarean section when the nurse dashed in and said, oh, my God, the war-- the war broke out. We said, what do you mean. He said, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. That was Sunday afternoon.

And from then on, everything went too fast. From then on, we became aware of what was going on in the world. But the information, what you are too young to realize, but the information that you received in newspapers, they had no real commentators on radio or what have you.

Heck, when I was at-- before I worked 24 hours on and 24 hours off, I worked 35 hours out of 48 hours. So actually, we were very busy people.

Were you concerned for your family back in Hungary?

Well, of course, I was, but I had nothing-- I had no knowledge whatsoever what happened to them.

During that time, you had no contact.

I found out after the war. As a matter of fact, they knew about me before I knew about them. That was after the war.

But there was no--

After the war--

--no contact.

--the war was over. And I was stationed in Innsbruck, Austria. And I got into my Jeep with my Sergeant. I said, well, let's go to Hungary and see my folks. When we get to the Austrian border, the Russian troops stopped me, said where are you going? To Budapest.

Said you need it a special permission from the Russian legation. I said, where is the Russian legation. In Paris. So from Innsbruck, I went to Paris on a special arrangement. And I knocked on the door with a little cubbyhole. They didn't let me-- I never got any information there.

I thought that I could go-- after all, we landed in [? Loire, ?] France, and Innsbruck is a big distance. Hungary was much closer to Innsbruck. And I thought I would go over there. The war would be over. I didn't get there.

However, in Paris, it was a Hungarian legation-- not a legation-- it was a Hungarian group who was going to Hungary to establish a Hungarian legation in Hungary. And we stayed all in the same hotel. And one of the man said, well, he was on his way to Hungary. And I said, well, do me a favor.

And I gave the address. And I said, well, if you go to this address and find my parents, give him \$100. And I didn't know what happened. But later on when communication started, my mother told me and wrote to me, that a big automobile stopped in front of the apartment where they lived. And with an American interpreter, they came, telling that I'll send them some money.

And he gave \$100-- 100 dollar bills. Told them to be very careful. They lived on that \$100 for several months. So they knew. Not easy to talk about this.

I know. Let's go back to when you became a citizen.

But I'm talking so much.

It's wonderful.

Let's go back to when you became a citizen. What did it feel like to become an American citizen?

I beg your pardon?

What did it feel like to become an American citizen?

I didn't have too much feeling because I hoped for so-- not for so long. What was a surprise that I get the citizenship much sooner than I anticipated. Apparently, they were anxious to give citizenship because they anticipated that these people get into the service and they needed physicians in the army. It went, think, just like one, two, three.

I got married in January-- I got my citizenship in January. I went down and reported for-- they gave me a physical examination. Not only a physical examination. They were absolutely elated. I said, what's the excitement? When I get there, somebody said, come in here, he said. Come, come. Everybody get all excited.

They were looking for physicians who spoke other languages and diverse skills. They were organizing the-- these overseas battalions from Nordic countries and from Europe that they wanted to use these people to use the northern Hungary as a special unit. And they needed a Hungarian-- they needed somebody-- I spoke about a half a dozen languages then.

And I was a skier. So they pushed me through in no time at all. Except I never got the job. But I got my commission in matter of days, absolutely in record time.

We're talking about spring of 1944 now?

I'm talking about the very beginning of 1944.

The beginning of 1944.

Because March 9th, we got married the 9th of March. That's why the [INAUDIBLE].

What is your wife's name?

What's your name? Priscilla. Last name too? Priscilla Marguerite Ward, isn't it? And she was a very beautiful young lady, very beautiful young lady. Actually, it was war time. You did not wait too long. I did not expect to get into the service that fast. I didn't mind that I did. I didn't expect that fast to go overseas, which I did.

So when did you go overseas?

In the fall of '44. And as a matter of fact, that was the second anniversary of-- our wedding anniversary, '46. I was back

from war by then. And I went overseas. We landed up in [? Lauraguel, ?] France, the unit. But anyway, I was in the service for several months before we went over there.

Where were you stationed?

In May, I was reported to Carlisle barracks, which was a medical field service school.

It's in Pennsylvania?

Yes. For five and a half weeks, they gave an infantry training. Because we were not-- most of us physicians, they were not soldiers. They made them into soldiers. And after that, I was assigned to a hospital in Charleston for a very little while. And then again more general hospital in South Carolina, where I was up in the mountains.

That's Black Mountains. They're mostly--

North Carolina.

What? North Carolina. Mostly wounded from the Pacific were brought in, assuming that they might have been exposed some ailments or diseases that insects can transmit. So that was a high altitude hospital where I spent a couple of months maybe. And from then, I was transferred to Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina.

And from there, we were actually organized to be shipped overseas. I reported to the 87 ACORN division. And just before the week, before we were going overseas, they checked my teeth. And a couple of teeth they thought should come out because it would be much worse if I come back and I have a toothache, which was a logical thing to do, except they butchered me so badly that I had to be taken out of the unit. And I couldn't go with them.

They assigned me to the 892nd Medical Clearing Company. And that's the unit that I went to the war. The medical battalion is made up from an ambulance company, a collecting company, and a deterred company. It's called clearing company. But more definite, surgery and help can be given to the wounded before they are shipped to station hospitals or general hospitals.

So I was assigned to the 892nd Medical Clearing Company, who just came back from the Pacific theater of operation. And we went overseas. We landed in [? Lauraguel, ?] France. We went all the way through northern France.

And I just noticed today that we got to battle stars on our medal for the [?Rhineland?] campaign and the Central European campaign. We had, all through the war, special assignment. Whenever a unit has heavy casualties, we were sent in and helped them out. We got all kinds of different assignments.

It was a unit which was assigned to the 7th Army. And the 7th Army was a very fast-moving army, just south of Patton's 5th Army. And they were continuously getting in and out of divisions or situations. And that's how we eventually ended up in Munich, Germany sometime in April, yes.

We were in Heppenheim before. We crossed the Rhine in Kaiserslautern, and we were assigned to take over a huge compound of allied prisoners of war hospital. A German prisoner of war hospital with hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds of patients. It was one of the cruelest place I ever have seen.

As a matter of fact, I had the sword that the commanding officer handed to me when we were sent in to take over the place, which we did. There were 900 Russians there, by one Yugoslav medical man. And there were very, very ugly situation in the compound, where we found the American badly-- Americans who were wounded at the Bulge.

And it was just an ugly situation. Later on, I found out that the commanding officer toasted every day when they had a large number of people who died. And he was eventually convicted as a war criminal. But that's a different story.

We were in Munich. And I have no idea what we did in Munich. We must have had a number of-- the war ended in

May. So in April, there was a lot of commotion, a lot of-- I don't know really what we did.

However, I do know that in one episode we were-- the 7th Army headquarters sent us down to Dachau, which was just a relatively short distance.

Did you know what that was?

No, no, we didn't. I never came across in Germany who stated that he was a Nazi. And I have never come across in Germany who ever told me about-- there was anything like a concentration camp. Even people who lived alongside Dachau-- Dachau, that's just about an hour away-- not even-- half an hour away from Munich. And there were several villages all over.

Lately-- later on, I just made a point of talking to some of the people alongside whether they knew about these things. Nobody. But that is a possibility, because nobody knows about anything. First of all, when you are in the war, you know a perimeter maybe about five miles which is around you. You don't know what goes on. Just no way of communication, absolutely.

So at that point, you didn't know anything about camps, concentration?

I didn't know anything about it. But we got-- we were asked to send the platoon. The company had one platoon-- two platoons. So a clearing company, a special clearing company like we were, there were about 90 enlisted men, 10 medical officers, two dental officers, and a chaplain. So it was a-- and a large number of medical officers for a small unit, with the very idea that they can keep more that need treatment.

So my platoon was sent in to Dachau to help them out, to help with whatever they could. In those days, I don't know what they really did, besides just taking care of the people who were dying. There were a large number of people who were dying of typhus.

Are you talking about being in the Dachau now?

Being in Dachau now.

What was your first impression when you got there?

It was horrible.

What did you see first?

Well, when I was there--

Did you go by truck or by car? How did you get there?

By my Jeep.

By Jeep.

The chaplain and I went into my Jeep. And the rest of them in ambulances.

And what was your first thing that you saw? Your first impression?

A lot of people who were dead. A mountain of killed people, or it seemed that way anyway. A lot of things which was-- so much rumors, so many rumors were in what was going on. At the time, we didn't know which one was true and what wasn't true. But it was true when you see, and I have some of the pictures that I took.



I took an awful lot of pictures all through my war. And most of them, I don't know where I took it. Because unless I sent it home with a note, such as such picture was taken somewhere. But I have some pictures of Munich. And those pictures in Munich are April. When was-- I don't know when Dachau was liberated?

On April 29th, 1945.

The story that we got when we got to Dachau, that a combat team, led by a Texan-- it must have been the 45th Division-- could have been-- Texas colonel who took over the compound-- not took over. He fought over it. That had a regular battle over the whole thing.

And there is a whole-- maybe I'll just show you the pictures. That might be enough.

Well, if you don't mind, if I could just--

Well, I think if I show you the pictures-- you said, what did I see? I can show you what we see-- what we saw.

Yeah, but for the purposes of the tape recording, I just-- as a doctor--

We were-- we were establishing sick--

What did you do?

Sick-- sick people to take care of the sick ones who were ambulatory. But the places where they were, they were all over the place, these hundreds and hundreds of patients, hundreds of bodies.

Who decided--

Bodies.

Who decided which ones to take care of? Was that your decision?

No, it would have been-- we were not enough people there to take over such a large area. They already had a great many medical units there, possibly the medical unit of the division which occupied. They had a-- every division has a medical battalion. So the medical battalion went in with the combat team and they took care of them.

But they were so overwhelmed that they asked for all the help that they could possibly get. So we were--

What were your specific duties?

Mostly vaccination for typhus. Take care of the people who were dying, which was very little we could do.

Could you talk to any of them? You spoke all these languages.

I spoke to several people, several people. Everybody was willing to talk. One of the biggest jobs we had was to keep people away from food. They were starved, hungry. And the food came in. They were just eating so much that they got sick over it. Actually, they had acute-- the acute ailment was caused by us, who they fed them.

So there were a great many-- most of the work at Dachau in my unit were my medical and surgical technicians who were helping the individual wards, taking care of. We did more or less supervisory thing. And I'd see a couple of pictures, that we established a sick place. It was a sign, sick, cold. And we took care of the ambulatory people who we could take care of for a few days.

The unit stayed in. They needed more medical technicians than they needed medicine officers. So some of these fellows were there for quite a while.

Did you do any surgery while you were there?

No, no.

No.

It was no place to do anything else except give emergency medical care and more or less try to-- try to create a place where people can live. I believe two or three weeks later I went back again one time, and they were still about 100 people dying a day.

Did you feel that your response would have been different if you hadn't been a physician? Or were you more prepared to see--

Oh, i never gave any thought to that.

Were you more prepared because you're a physician? Were you more prepared to handle what you saw because you were a physician or less? Do you think it made a difference that you were physician in how you reacted?

Maybe when you are a physician, and you see so many people who are killed, you have a certain confusion. How can that happen? How can it happen that so many people are killed so miserably. It was an ugly experience.

You know that I didn't look at these pictures for 50 years. I just did not feel that-- I gave it to my son last time, just a couple of years ago, after we moved in here. He decided to-- he said it was time that I write a book about your-- oh, more or less your lifetime, so your children and grandchildren know who you are, what you did, what you didn't do.

And I said, take these pictures. And I know that we had it at home for God knows how many years. I never looked at it. There are not nights enough to look at it. And today, I'm even more disturbed because I saw them-- I did not know just what you people do, what you want to do.

But I thought I'm going to get myself at least one copy of these pictures and somewhat enlarged. And it looks uglier than these small pictures. The small pictures-- first of all, I reached a phase when I don't see so good and I don't hear so good. So things are not that clear. All of a sudden, I see pictures which are too good to see. And I find it very disturbing.

What was the reaction of the other American soldiers that you were with? Did you talk-- did you all talk this over while you were--

How much you know about Dachau?

Well, I'm--

Because I'm got something that I don't want you release, tell it to anybody. But it has been bothering me all these many years. When we get there, the story was-- and I don't know how many days after we-- they took over the thing.

The story was that the combat team was so outraged what they saw in Dachau that the SS troops, which were guards, lined up. And this colonel machine gunned them down. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. I never ever heard that. And I don't particularly like to talk about that.

So there is a picture where I see a hole mound of SS troops. So it must have been true, or at least it is a plausible explanation. It was an ugly, ugly feeling to-- a lot of people were greatly disturbed, an awful lot of people.