

This is tape 2, side A. We are interviewing William Hess. And I wanted to ask you to describe your reunion with your parents.

When my parents arrived, we're going to go to Danville-- the man whom I was living with. And as I said before, they really treated me like their own child. I was taken along on day trips and so on. I ate with them at their table. They were really very, very kind.

What was her name?

Their name was Biteg. It's a rather strange German name. And he was, of course, of German descent. And his wife was Scotch-Irish. He was Catholic but non-practicing, and she was a Protestant. And the children went to, I think, Protestant church when they did go.

They were very kind. The man owned a car. He told me if I wanted to meet my parents at the New York train in Indianapolis, which is 90 miles from Danville, I could take the car, which I was happy to do. And I met my parents at the station in Indianapolis and took them back to Danville.

And they stayed at the same place where I was living. They made a room available to them until they found an apartment and until their furniture arrived. Now, that was another thing. It always comes through in this that we were lucky. And I think we really were extremely lucky. Somebody must have looked out for us, because with all the pitfalls, we made it, our little family.

My parents were able to ship their household goods. They weren't allowed to buy anything new, but they were allowed to take what they had. That was boxed in huge crates. And that arrived about two weeks after they did in September of 1939. We were lucky to find an inexpensive apartment. And so we moved into the apartment.

Again, a lucky break-- the crates arrived on a German ship, which was the last German ships to make the port of New York before World War I broke out. If it had been on the next ship or if the ship had left a day or two later, it would have turned around in the middle of the ocean and taken all of their belongings back. So by the skin of their teeth, they were able to salvage at least their belongings.

I think my father at the time owned something like \$200 or so. That was this total substance for 30, 40 years of work. And of course, we were very happy to see each other. And I didn't go into a lot of details about what happened, especially to how I thought he might be sensitive to it. But we moved into our own place. And eventually, we did talk about it. And my father did tell me what happened to him in Dachau in detail. That's how I found out about it.

What other things that your parents tell you about with respect to the changes in Germany since your departure?

Well, of course, as I was able to see for myself, it got a lot worse. My mother told me about a woman who lived up on the third floor of the apartment house where we had lived who were very friendly people-- very friendly with us. She was a good bit younger than my parents. And she felt comfortable coming to our apartment.

I remember one time when she was pregnant at a thunderstorm, she was afraid-- she asked if she could come in, and of course, we said, yes. And my mother told me it was just terrible. One day her husband who was employed at the bank was called in by his boss and told that they understand that they still traffic with Jews, and if the man valued his job, then they better cut that out.

And so she came to my mother and said, I feel terrible, but I can't afford to be seen talking to you anymore. So when I pass you, I'll wave and say, hello, but that's about all I can do. So my parents were very upset, of course, that this happened. Now, in contrast, this business friend that my parents were talking about, they were welcome right up to the end even though they had relatives who made snide remarks.

When your Jewish friends come, you serve them better than you would do us when we come for dinner. And this man,

he said he couldn't care less how they felt about this thing. So my father also told me of another incident-- the place where he had his business. There was a chocolate and coffee store on the first level. And my father would go in, and this man would talk to him about the shortages and how the Nazis were ruining everything.

And while they were there, a woman enters the store and says, Heil Hitler, and he answers, Heil Hitler. And she says, I'd like to have a pound of coffee. And he says, I'm sorry, but with the shortages, we don't have any coffee. Heil Hitler, and she walked out. And then he says to my father-- by the way, would you like some coffee?

My father said, I don't think my wife buys it. And he says, well, for you, I have coffee. For her, I don't have coffee. So I'm not saying that this was very prevalent, but it wasn't total. And these things, of course, were isolated with a lot of other experiences. You did run into hard times and unfriendly responses. But I don't recall specifically that they were in any way mistreated anywhere.

When your parents came to this country, did they have any problems adjusting to life in America?

Very greatly. It's a strange thing, and history repeats itself. I always had to remember the story of the Israelites in the desert when they complained to Moses, why didn't you leave us with the flesh pots of Egypt? I had an experience with my father one time-- maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. Eventually, he opened a little dry goods store with money he borrowed in a small town not in Danville, about five miles away.

He had to take two buses-- we had no car. And it was very difficult to get started. And the competition, of course, was fierce. People would come on Saturday to come to Danville and shop, and he would see them go past, and he would take very little money. Well, one time I came home from work in the evening-- and usually Saturday night it was-- that was the busy day. And I'd come home dead tired at 9 o'clock in the evening, and I would have a bite to eat and talk to my parents.

My father wasn't there. I said, what happened? Where's father? He's upstairs in bed. Go up and see him. I went up, I said, what's wrong? He was in bed staring stonily at the ceiling. I said, what happened? He says, I was there all day long from 9:00 in the morning till 6:00 in the afternoon. How much money do you think I took in?

I said, I don't have the slightest idea. Takes a \$0.50 piece from the table, says, \$0.50. That's all I take in. Monday, I'm going to go back to the guy who lent me the money, and I'll throw the key at his feet and say, I don't want to do business. You can't do business anymore. This is a terrible place. I should have stayed in Germany.

I said, what? I said, you didn't have enough from Dachau, you want to be back there? Well, he was in no mood to argue at the time. Of course, he didn't really believe it, but it was difficult. My parents tended to speak German, and I told them, here we speak English. My mother always made comparisons-- it became laughable after a while.

My mother would buy blueberries-- and the blueberries here are big and they're white inside-- in Germany, they were blue inside. So I made up a little song about how much better everything in Germany was-- that even the blueberries are blue all the way through and so on. It was very difficult, but they did make an effort. They did make an effort.

And eventually, I think they felt at home. But it was difficult for them, because for my mother, time stood still. And I used to tell her, look, if you went back today, you wouldn't recognize it, because it's not only the place, it's the time. First time I went back to Germany on business in 1952 and I told my parents what had changed in this city, I said, you wouldn't recognize it anymore. It's not the place that you left.

So she always used to say, everything's so different here. I said, it's different over there too now. It's changed.

Let's go back to 1939. Are you running ahead of me a bit.

Tell me about September 1939-- where you were and what you heard about the Nazi invasion of Poland.

Oh, well, of course at that time, I listened to the radio and I read the paper. The Danville paper was a pretty lousy paper,

but we had the Chicago Tribune and so on. And of course, you went to the movies, you saw the newsreel, and so you saw what was going on at the time. And at that time, we were pretty sure that there wasn't going to be another Munich-- that this time it was going to break out. And in a way, we felt relieved because finally, finally, somebody who had arms and not just a voice was going to do something.

What was the American reaction to this news story?

Well, the Middle West was isolationist in outlook. So the outlook at the time was, well, that's not our business. Let's just make sure that we stay out of that war.

Was that reaction surprising to you in any way?

Well, in a way, yes, except I had encountered it. I knew that the people here were concerned with America. And there were still economic problems at the time. There was still a lot of unemployment, and low wages, and so on. So I knew at that time what the peoples feeling were.

Tell me about your life in Danville at the end of 1939 and the beginning of the 1940s.

The fact that at 16 I had to work didn't put me in touch with young people. I worked six days a week, and I still had to take lessons for quite a while-- two or three nights a week. And I was supposed to do homework too. And Saturday, the day when most young people have free, that was the day in which I worked the longest, and I was dead tired in the evening.

So I had very little contact with people of my own age at that particular time. There were Jewish people living there, and they had children my age. But I was at that time rather shy. I would never go out and call up a girl or ask somebody to go out. If they asked me, that was fine.

But the fact that I had no money, and the Jews in Danville very relatively better off, I always felt like I was the poor relative. And the people I met at the store, well, they were nice people, but they didn't have my interests. Usually I had one or two friends, but what can you do in Danville? I went to the movies, listened to the radio, not an awful lot.

Now, in 1940, I was contacted by some of the young people. I found out there was a Jewish youth group, which I joined. And so I had a little more contact then with the local people, which helped me a great deal. But I always felt that I came from a big city, an interesting area. And here it's all flat land and cornfields. And so I never really particularly liked living there.

You followed the war news.

Oh, yes, assiduously, always.

Tell me about your reaction to the Nazi invasion of Soviet Russia.

Well, I had mixed reactions at the time, because after all, the year before, the arch enemy of Hitler, Stalin, had signed a non-aggression pact with the Russians. And incidentally, I remember one guy in Danville, a Jewish tailor who was a communist-- and I couldn't wait when they signed that Hitler-Stalin pact when he came into the store to look for goods, I said, well, what do you say now about your friends making friends with the Nazis? He was somewhat embarrassed about it.

But still, I figured, well, if he attacked the Soviet Union, then here's a powerful enemy. And up to that point to 1941, the Nazis had had it their way. They overran everything they invaded, and it looked like there was no stopping. And here's this vaunted huge Red Army, of which they were so deadly afraid. Maybe now he's bitten off too much.

But of course, the first few weeks were very disconcerting when the Nazis advanced, took hundreds of thousands of prisoners, and it looked like Russia was going the way of Belgium, and France, and all the other countries that were

invaded.

Pearl Harbor-- your recollection.

Yes. Well, of course, everybody who lived at a given time will remember. And it was a Sunday. We were having dinner. I was waiting to listen to the concert by the New York Philharmonic when the broadcast was interrupted with a very stark announcement that unidentified planes had attacked Pearl Harbor, and there was nothing further at the time. So this, of course, brought it home-- now we're in it for sure, and for god knows how long.

Did you see service in the military?

Yes. Yes, I received a draft notice in August of 1942 and was making arrangements to leave when I suddenly got a recall of the draft notice and to come to the draft board. Why? Well, we just discovered you're an enemy alien. You have to sign a certain form, and this is a small town, we don't have it, so we'll let when you will be called up.

Now, one of the things that really griped me-- here I was an enemy alien, and I couldn't leave town without permission of the state's attorney and let him know where I go and when I go. And so I really bridled at that. And so I was pretty much locked in-- I could do some traveling, but I always had to get permission.

And they never contacted me again. So I wrote to them and I said, what's the matter now? Don't you want me or what? So very promptly then, the form had arrived, and I got another draft notice. And one year after Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1942, I left for the reception center at that time of Scott Field, Illinois, near St. Louis.

In what capacity did you serve?

Well, of course, I was drafted into the army. At that time, you couldn't even volunteer anymore if you wanted to, because everyone was subject to the draft. I was drafted into the army. And in the beginning, they were very anxious to have linguists. So anyone who had foreign language knowledge-- not everybody, but a great many of the people were pulled out from whatever they had been assigned to and sent to the Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland for training to be a German interrogator. Interrogator in the language of German with a mission of being formed into a team to be attached to an American combat division to interrogate newly-captured prisoners for tactical information on the battlefield-- that was my training.

Did you actually serve in the European theater?

No, I never went overseas. Very few of us were pulled out and sent to a strategic interrogation center at Fort Hunt, which was a classified installation, South of Alexandria. It was what you would call the day a combined services interrogation center. Was used by Army, and Navy, and by the British as well to interrogate prisoners who had strategic information.

And that included all captured submarine personnel-- and there were many of them who were brought there for interrogation about technological developments, naval order of battle. And then, of course, there also was interrogation primarily for main strategic targets-- ball-bearing, petroleum, and rubber were the most strategic material. But anyone who had knowledge about the workings of the government, or the propaganda machinery, or anything, they were brought to that center and interrogated by Army or Navy interrogators.

Including you?

Yes. Actually, I didn't do much interrogation. There was something else that was going on there, and that is they had bugged all the rooms. And so we sat with earphones on our ears to listen to prisoners. There were always two, sometimes three in the room. And some of the prisoners were turned around and became stool pigeons who were made to entice information from these people. Then important information was transcribed and used.

I don't know how good the stuff was. We found out from a book that was written after the war, when information

became available under the Freedom of Information Act-- because this data was classified, and we were made to sign we would never talk about what went on there because the British found after World War I that people talked and that helped the Germans in World War II.

But anyway, there's a book, The [GERMAN] Escape is the name of it, which was written by an American-- that the Navy personnel did spot the microphones under the ceiling by the third round there and got coded letters back to Germany so that people who arrived there knew what was going on at that center. And so I don't know. I guess the interrogation yielded important material, but not the listening, I don't believe.

Did you experience any anti-Semitism or any anti-foreign sentiment?

Well, the only thing I remember that once during the war, I was going somewhere, and I was on a railway train, and I stood on the platform while the train was halted at a station. And I heard a couple of people talking to each other, making anti-Semitic remarks. And I was boiling, and I was considering, should I punch them in the nose for doing that?

But of course, I would have been court martialed for it. And these people were, at that time, I guess, just making use of their First Amendment rights. Strangely, at work at Fort Hunt, the only anti-Semitic remarks I heard was made by two American officers who were called in because they had been attaches in Berlin, and one of our prisoners was a German officer who was being interrogated at that center.

And I guess they thought maybe that these two colonels could get some information from him. But they held conversations in which these officers lambasted Roosevelt and I guess also made some anti-Semitic remarks. I remember their names, but I'm not going to mention them now.

Did you have citizenship during the war?

I applied. I was eligible before I was drafted. But actually, by being in the Army, you qualify a little earlier than you would. You don't have to wait five years. But since I was drafted at such a time, my citizenship was actually delayed a little bit. And I did become a citizen in May of 1943 at Hagerstown, Maryland while I was stationed in Camp Ritchie-- Fort Ritchie now.

What did you know about the way Jews were being treated in Nazi-occupied Europe during the war years?

Well, during the war years, of course, news came back. Now, my parents subscribed to a German refugee newspaper, Aufbau which is still published in New York. It's really a fine publication. They had renowned writers. They were not noisy, anti-Nazi propagandists-- they were very factual. And they carried a tremendous amount of information.

And of course reading that, you read whenever something became available. So you knew what was going on-- not the total scope of it, but you knew enough that people were being killed wholesale, that they were being deported. In fact, I have a postcard upstairs that my mother received in 1940 or '41 from a woman she didn't know in Frankfurt who wrote to my mother that she has been asked by her neighbor, Mr. Sternberg, to let my mother know that they are going to go on a trip now for a while, so they won't be able to communicate.

But when they arrive to where they're going, she will get in touch again. And that was, of course, when my uncle and aunt were being deported from Frankfurt. They were being deported to Lodz in Poland. And my mother wrote to them. I don't know whether they ever received any answer. And my mother sent food packages, which were signed for not by them but, by someone in the camp as receipt of the package.

And then, of course, after we got in the war, we didn't have any news anymore. And they were undoubtedly gassed, because the Germans themselves said that they were disappeared in the East, which means they weren't put in a labor camp where they worked and died there, but they were immediately gassed.

Is there anything else that comes to your mind that you want to talk about regarding the war years and your service in this country?

Being in the army, we received a lot of information through intelligence. We knew that what the Nazis were building, that they were building in Peenemunde, that they were doing rocket research. And so they were also active in nuclear research. And that, of course, were subjects which we watched very closely. If anybody came in who knew what the status of production and in Peenemunde was.

And then also, we were very interested in any kinds of developments in submarines and aircraft production. And so from these sources, I was informed as to what was going on.

Tell me about May 8, 1945-- V-E Day.

That was a great holiday, because now it was over in Europe. And especially after the Battle of the Bulge, when we all thought that the war was just about over, and here comes this terrible and very successful German counter-offensive, which would add weeks to the war. But now in Europe, it's finally over, but it's still just half a victory. Because although for the Jews there is no further suffering, for the American soldier, there is still Japan and the Pacific.

After the war was over in May in Europe, did you make any efforts to find friends, or cousins, or other people that were left behind in Germany?

No, I didn't. There was no way of doing this thing, because in the first few months, there was no fraternization. And I was still in the Army, so there wasn't very much we found out. I had relatives in Europe-- in Italy, in Belgium, and in France. My one sister of my mother's and her husband had gone to France, and we were in touch with her until the war broke out in 1941.

I don't know whether my mother heard anything from them. They were in Paris. So that was the occupied area. I don't remember at this point when my mother learned that that sister and her husband as well were deported to Auschwitz. My cousin in Italy we had-- well, that was enemy territory too, so we didn't hear anything from her. And another cousin who had been in Belgium, we learned then that he had somehow been able to get to Switzerland where he was interned and survived the war. On my father's side, my immediate family members all were able to emigrate.

How was the news of the genocide covered in American press?

It became known fairly early on. I really don't recall too much in detail about it. Once the war was over, of course, you heard it. And in the beginning, there were so many other things that you were preoccupied with-- the end of the war. And organizations weren't set up where you could readily make inquiries.

I'm sure my parents who at that time lived in Danville, where as I was here in Washington, I'm sure whatever possibilities there were to find out, my parents did. Oh, I forgot one thing-- one sister and brother-in-law of my mother's lived in Brussels. And they were the closest to my parents. And I'm sure that my parents immediately tried to find out what happened to them. As it happened, they did survive the war in Belgium.

Did you follow the events of the Nuremberg Trials?

Well, somehow or other, I didn't follow them that closely. I tried to get a job in the Washington office of the war crimes commission. I didn't get the job. And then just two weeks-- this was only a temporary job anyway-- two weeks later, then I found a permanent job that I held for a long time. I did follow it. As a matter of fact, after the war, I worked at Ford Hunt for a while. They kept the operation going.

And a lot of the work that was being done there was to go through documents that they had generated that were being transmitted to Justice Jackson, who was the American representative on the war crimes trial. So we did have some information as to certain things that were being dealt with at the time.

How long did you stay in the military?

I was discharged in February of '46. So I was in for a little over three years.

Tell me a little bit about your post-war professional career.

I liked what I was doing. I wasn't a good businessman at all. I really didn't enjoy it, and I wasn't good at it. But what to do-- now, by that time, I was married. We got married and in October '45. The war was over. My wife had come to Washington as a government worker. And so when the war was over, we got married.

And I went back to work at the last military installation where I was, and I really didn't have too much of an idea. My education had been greatly curtailed. It was incomplete. Business didn't appeal to me. And my wife says, well, go to school under the GI Bill of Rights.

Well, I'd taken care of myself ever since I was 16, and I couldn't see to earn my own living. So I figured, well, I'll go to school at night. The camp closed or was transferred a short time later, and I found employment as a technical translator for the Signal Corps. And that was moved too.

So somebody suggested I go to the Army map service. They used linguists. Well, I'm not a cartographer. I went out anyway, out in the sticks in Maryland in Glen Echo. And to my surprise, I was hired, because they didn't only do maps, they were also doing intelligence work for the Corps of Engineers.

And since I spoke German and since they had captured a great deal of German documents, and since intelligence was really a neglected field, especially in the Army-- the Navy did a little more, the army did very little-- and there was a decision at the time. We've got to know more about our potential enemies, which was at that time the Soviet Union. And since most of the documents were in German, I was hired.

But I didn't realize that this was an up and coming career field that under the National Security Act of 1947 they had established the CIA as a permanent institution, and also an intelligence program-- a coordinated intelligence program in a career field. So I took an exam, which was an elaboration of your experiences. And this is how I got into the Civil Service. And I have worked on intelligence ever since. I went to school at night. I went to GW University. I never finished.

GW is George Washington.

George Washington University here in Washington for several years taking courses, which I greatly enjoyed, but which were also somewhat of a drag-- working full-time taking courses. And then I also did translations to make some extra money. But I found the intelligence field something I was good, at something which I enjoyed doing. And it also later formed sort of the basis for my work in the Holocaust museum.

What work do you do for the Holocaust museum?

My basic employment is learning center specialist. The learning center is a bank of 20 interactive computers which have as their database the four volumes of the MacMillan Encyclopedia of the Holocaust plus additional data from the MacMillan Encyclopedia of the Third Reich, eyewitness interviews of survivors, music from and about the period, and documentary films. And what I do is I answer any questions that come up, other than explaining how the system works.

Very frequently, people ask me substantive questions, or a question about what we have in the system, and how to go about getting it. That's my basic occupation, and then I'm also busy on the floor doing whatever duties come up for the volunteers-- working with the public.

What have you with your background brought to this work that you do at the museum?

Well, of course, a great deal-- I have not mentioned one thing that I also did in my variegated life. Again, with a very little basic knowledge, when we joined the congregation, they were looking for religious school teachers. And since I had gone to religious school myself and I was willing to learn, they hired me. I kept one jump ahead of the students by

doing a lot of reading.

And I eventually became my own best student. And I taught religious school for 14 years talking to young people, addressing subjects and teaching them. In the field of intelligence, I had to deliver briefings frequently of military attaches, for example, going on station or coming back, foreign visitors, and things like that.

And having had to keep up with the political situation, the history, and the geography on a fairly wide basis, I felt that in the museum I could use all these skills. And I have found that it comes in very handy. Some consider me a walking encyclopedia.

We have to pause to flip the tape. One moment.

This is tape 2, side B. We are interviewing William Hess. And you were just telling me about being a walking encyclopedia.

No, I never used that expression, but that's what my fellow workers tell me. And of course, speaking German is helpful because we do get German visitors who greatly appreciate to find someone when they don't speak German so well themselves-- to find someone who is knowledgeable and who can talk to them in their language. And I'm sure that that has made friends for us.

And I always felt at the museum that especially Germans who come should have every opportunity to see and hear as much as possible, because it's vitally important for Germans to know as much as they can about that period.

What have you gotten from your volunteer experience?

I get a great deal of satisfaction from it. One of the duties I occasionally draw is giving introductory talks to young people who come-- well, actually, groups, any groups. But it's very frequently high school students. I find that being a survivor-- although I don't like to use that term, because survivor conjures up thoughts of someone who escaped or was in the camp. I never was in any real peril.

But under the terms of the museum, I'm a survivor. I can talk of some of my personal experience, having lived in the period, having kept up with it. There are not many people left who can do it. So if I can teach especially young people something firsthand-- not out of a book, but firsthand-- or at least having been alive at the time, that the lessons of the Holocaust have truly not been learned.

Every year, there are new examples-- but one that just ended last year in a lot of areas like parts of East Timor, which is hidden in the jungle where people are being murdered all the time-- all the generations up until now, having failed to do something about it. I always tell them someday if you get into a leading position-- and this can happen. We have Madeleine Albright, and we have Henry Kissinger, and so on-- maybe if you remember your visit here at the museum and that which you have seen, that you can make a difference and see to it that measures can be taken on a global basis that this sort of thing does not happen again.

Do you speak publicly outside the museum about your experiences?

No. When I was in Danville, as a matter of fact, I was occasionally asked by the lions or some other organization-- would I come in and talk about my experiences in Germany? Now, that was, of course, still the pre-war period. My father also was asked, and he did. And so at that time, yes, we tried to spread what word we could.

Again there, we had to be careful because my boss thought that maybe that the customers would like to have somebody here who is trying to maybe voice any opinion that maybe we should get into the war and help fight these Nazis. That wasn't very popular in the late-'30s, and early-'40s-- at least until Pearl Harbor.

I'd like you to think about your volunteer experiences at the museum, and see if there's anything you can share any special moments-- meaningful experiences-- that you can share?



Well, occasionally, I meet people who come from Germany, from my own area. A man came in one time-- he was sent to see me, and I talked in German to him. And I told him where I had lived and where I had spent a vacation one time. And he just couldn't get over it. Here's a man he meets in Washington who knows their home, and who has lived in Germany, and who speaks German and can talk to him now about the Holocaust.

This is always very gratifying-- or if you can help somebody to get into the museum. One time there was a man who came in and asked where he could get a pass to go in. I said, well, they're all given out today. He was German, I said, where do you come? He was from Germany.

He says, well, don't bother. If I can't get in, I come here occasionally. I said, well, what do you do? I'm a member of parliament. I said, well, you're a member of parliament, I've got to get you in here somehow. So there's a way of scrounging tickets, and so I scrounged a ticket, and I gave it to him. And he was very, very appreciative.

I saw him again when he came out, and he told me that this is something that he'll never forget. And I thought, well, if a member of the parliament comes back with these views-- and one other thing, of course, was we occasionally get survivors who sign books or talk. And one of my eyewitness interviews that I always like to use as an example is that of Gerda Klein.

And hers-- it's like a fairy tale almost. In a way, I can't compare it to myself, because I wasn't in peril, and she was. But she got through to it too where there were so many instances where she could have been wiped out. She goes to a camp that's run by a woman who looks like evil incarnate, and yet this woman saved all the inmates. And finally, she's liberated by a man she marries. And she lives in this country now. That, I always think, is one of the high points when you have experiences like that.

Is your wife also a survivor?

No, my wife was born in this country.

Is there anything you'd like to add? Anything that has come to your mind before we conclude? Any final thoughts that you might have?

Well, one of the things-- I don't know if this is going too far afield again-- it comes up very frequently, you know, how Jews in Germany felt. The German Jews, most of whom had lived there for hundreds of years, had always yearned to be full-fledged citizens. Finally, we reached that status and became super patriots. They considered themselves Germans who were Jewish, but primarily they were Germans.

In World War I, they fought to a slightly greater proportion in the situation in the army and also died to a slightly greater proportion. So when the Nazis came, this was totally incomprehensible to them. They tried to reason with them. We are Germans like you are. We fought in the war. What do you want from us?

They never understood that they were dealing with a man who wasn't ignorant about all that. They were dealing with a fanatic, ultra-nationalist, racist who had an idea of purging Germany of everything that was not Germanic. And he had no use for those people he couldn't re-educate. And of course, you can't re-educate someone from out of their race.

So this was the viewpoint that they brought to this whole thing. And prior to the Hitler period, most Jews-- not all of them, but a great many of them-- lived a very good life there. And in many cases, like my parents-- my father was 55 when he came here-- out of those 55 years, 50 years or more were very gratifying. He earned a good living. He had his roots there, his family was there, and so he didn't want to let go.

And I have since found that even my generation, there is still an attachment to your old home. In 1993, we were invited to be guests of the city in the program that had been going on and still goes on where former citizens are invited. We were received by the mayor at the time who was then Manfred Rommel, the son of the famous field marshal.

And they really tried to make us feel, well, you belong to us-- in the way even the rabbis spoke that while you're gone, there is still part of your old home in you. And I find this is true-- there is still a certain sentimental attachment to it. It was part of your life. I'm not angry at Germans today.

Those who committed crimes, of course, there is in my mind no forgiving them. You can't forgive something that's done to other people, especially. But I feel that the current country-- I feel that a democracy, which didn't exist before during the Hitler period-- they weren't accustomed to it. They've had two generations of it now.

And of course, there's no guarantee for anything, but I think there's a good chance that Germany will remain not a hostile environment, will be part of the family of nations. And when we visit over there, which we have done since we have a daughter over there, I have an open mind. Of course, when I talk to somebody my own age and they ask me, how long have you been in America?

I can see the wheels turn and I think, what were you doing at that particular time? And I know I've talked to people who if this were 1933 or '34 would kick me out of their presence. And I don't want to know so much either of what they did at that particular time. If they talk to me, I'll address what I think about it.

But most of the people now, the overwhelming majority, were either children or weren't even born at that time. So when I was in the army, I felt that I was an American soldier. I had been kicked out of there-- vilified, kicked out, deprived of my citizenship. Here, I was allowed to come in, I was invited to participate, I was allowed to participate in everything.

And so I fought for this country. And this is my home. I have no desire to go back and live there. It's fine to visit, but that's it.

Thank you. And that concludes our conversation today.