This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Wolfgang Mueller. This is tape number 2, side A, and you've arrived in Albuquerque.

OK, of course, the family was kind of in disarray because the head of the family had suddenly passed away. He had suffered a heart attack at his desk in his office.

This is July 1936.

It was around July 26 when I arrived there. Just I was getting closer. So they didn't know exactly how to handle it, what to do with me. So I was very fortunate again. I was there like one day or so, one or two days. And they put me up in their home. It was a magnificent home, extremely wealthy people. This was his home basically.

And they had a place in the mountains above Las Vegas, New Mexico, called Trout Springs. And they said that the mourning period was about over, and they planned to spent a few weeks there in that place. And they asked me if I'd like to go with them. And I said, yeah.

And also they found out, of course, right away, and talking to me, of course-- I was easy to talk to because I knew English. And they knew that I played tennis and that I was also an avid skier and all that, and they liked all that. As a matter of fact, I think the first morning, I had to go play tennis with them. And, of course, I was very good, very, very good, much better than them. So that, they really liked me.

And one of the girls was kind of cute. And then so I got to drive with her up to the mountains. And then I spend like a whole month of August and I think half of September in the mountains there. And there was a Jewish boy from Cincinnati, Bobby Weinshanker. That was a cousin of theirs. It was there too. And so I had a pal.

And we took horses and we packed into the mountains. And there was a Mexican boy that was our age. It was a son of the caretaker that lived on the other hill opposite to where they had their cottages. And, of course, he was our guide. And it was the most incredible summer I ever had altogether, fabulous.

And they had a tennis court there. They had a tennis court on their estate there. And they had these cabins like-- Camp David I guess is like that-- and with people sleep in there, the central place where you ate and everything and had company from New York and from all over. And these were young couples, a little bit older than me.

But they were girls there that were my age. And then I played tennis with everybody. And I rode horses. And I had a ball. I thought America really was the best place in the whole world.

Were you thinking about Germany at all?

No. I forgot Germany. I didn't even remember where Germany was. I didn't even-- it was too incredibly wonderful.

Did you have contact with your parents that summer?

Maybe letters. Maybe occasional correspondence. I got a letter occasionally, maybe. I remember I have a letter from my Uncle Heinrich, who was really one of my favorite uncles, that died in a concentration camp. And he wrote to me. And I still have the letter. I have it in my archives. And he said I ought to marry that little Maxine. He knew about her. Not his daughter. I was thinking about marriage-- like that was the last thing I was interested in, marriage, you know.

So anyway, Rudolf Dryer came in September after about a month or six weeks. And he said they decided to put me in the hardware department in their business. He was going to take me back and put me to work. And I left there, and then I went to work.

And then pretty soon I moved out of their house. And I started to make some money. I also met some American boys. One boy was working on a newspaper and everything. And I found out, you know, he was very impressed with-- he took me to wrestling matches and bought American teletype machines and cars and girls and drinking whiskey.

And then I became very Americanized, and I started working, started working. That's what I was doing, working. And then pretty soon-- first, I was just like clerking there on the office. And then very, very quickly I moved up, because I guess I dedicated myself to the job pretty well.

Like, for example, they had a catalog. I remember, a hardware business, they have a big catalog with all of that. Every week they had to change prices. And they had a ditto machine. And I would stay till late on Saturday, and I would make all the prices. And I would make the addition for the catalog. And they had 17 branches all over the state of New Mexico. And I would send them out to all the branches.

And pretty soon they gave me more responsible work. Within a short time, I had a secretary. And I was bidding on government contracts. And I was moving up in the company.

And by the time that it was time the war started, I was already selling. I had my car. And I had a room and everything. I had a nice place to live. And I was selling hardware. I was traveling.

Had you heard about Kristallnacht?

Do what?

Had you heard about Kristallnacht?

Yes.

What were your thoughts?

In the meantime, first, my sister came a year later. And she was supposed to join me in Albuquerque. But she didn't make it, because they gave her a package. What Jewish people did in Germany when the children went to America, in our class of people, first of all they try to train them in some skills that they could make a living over here. And my sister, like I told you, was four years older than me. So she had learned how to do calisthenics and massage and stuff like that, physical therapy.

And also, these people from Hanover had a daughter in Washington that was also a physical therapist. She was about a year or two older than my sister. And-- I'm sorry-- the daughter met her at the boat in New York. And because my sister had a package for her, my sister didn't know what it was. Usually gave her Leica, or something like that, something that they could send along, money, you know. So money was too dangerous. I don't think they gave money, but probably a Leica or something like that she had in her bag.

And she gave her the package. Her name was Margaret. Goldman was her maiden name. I don't know if she married then. Later it was Green. And she said to my sister, you know, Trudy, I think there's a job for you in Washington. She knew that she was a therapist, you know. There is a job. They need somebody. They need a girl at this place on Connecticut Avenue.

And my sister had the guts to get-- she was supposed to come to Albuquerque-- to get on the train to Washington and to apply for this job at 1747 Connecticut Avenue at Emile's. It was something like Elizabeth Arden. And she got the job. So she started to live in Washington.

And down the street from where she worked on Connecticut Avenue, up the street towards DuPont Circle, in the basement, there was this German couple. She was from a family in south Germany. And he had been a waiter, a Jewish man on the Hamburg America Line. And then he-- a steward-- and then he'd worked in the Mayflower Hotel. But he had gone back to Germany and gotten her a few years earlier. And they had opened up his little restaurant in the basement, a coffee shop in the basement of Connecticut Avenue.

What happened that she had 11 brothers and sisters. And two of her brothers had been in a concentration camp. Their name was Kilzeimer, her maiden name. And his name was Brandler. And one of these brothers, they had got them out. They sent them money to get them out of the concentration and bring them over here. And they'd been in there for Rassenschande. You know what that is? So because they had German girlfriends, you know.

And in Germany, they had been cattle dealers, had been in the cattle business. And also really, what they had in that little town in Konigsbach. It's near Pforzheim in Badens-- that's Baden in Germany-- they had had a butcher shop, kosher butcher shop. And you know, in Germany in the country, if you have a butcher shop, you actually have a slaughtering place too. They slaughtered animals. And they sold the meat. And the kids went out and started buying cattle for home, and later they traded in cattle. So they had become big cattle dealers.

And they came over here. And one of them, this particular one, his name was Bernie. And he got a job at Briggs and Company making hot dogs when he got over here. He would go to work at 2:00 in the morning. He got off early, around 10, 11 o'clock, and he went to his sister's restaurant. And she had the lunch orders then from those office buildings. So he went around and delivered the orders for the tips. And that way, he got a little bit extra money.

And they told him, there's this good looking Jewish girl, German girl-- Jewish wasn't important-- German girl had started to work doing the cleaning. She comes up here and gets a cup of coffee almost every day. So he waited for her. So she met him, and he became her future husband.

I had asked what your thoughts were when you heard about Kristallnacht.

Oh, I'm sorry. Well, what happened my mother was here. And my mother had come to visit my sister. It ties into this. She'd come here to visit my sister. And she was in Washington. She came out to Albuquerque. And she stayed with me for a while. I was in Albuquerque. And then the Kristallnacht occurred. Of course, it was in all the papers and everything. And then my father sent her a telegram. And things had gotten rough in Germany then. And he told her to delay her return. But she was on a visitor's visa.

Was this synagogue in Hanover destroyed?

Oh, yeah. Hanover was destroyed. And Paderborn, it was burned down. And, you know, people were arrested. And my brother told me all about what happened. He was a little boy. He was 10 years old. But he told me so people getting-- at night, my father was away a lot traveling. And he was standing in the front of the window at our house, and he saw this van pull up across the street there. And there was the Cohens living there.

And these guys were coming out. And then he heard the screaming. And they dragged this man out and beating him with a stick. And the woman was running behind him and her hair flowing. And they beat him like he was dead. And then they threw him in that van.

And when he saw that, little as he was, he told my father when he came, we got to leave. We got to get out of here. The children were smarter than parents. My brother told him, said that to my father. My brother tells the story. You should interview him. He was there. He saw that. He will never forget that trauma. And he had many other things happen.

I was with my brother in Germany two years ago, and we went to all these places and the cemeteries. And he saw the grave of one of the women that had taken care of him for a short time during those years. But Just before they left-- she was a cousin of my father's. And she died in a concentration camp. And my brother cried at her grave. And he didn't know it that she could have gotten out, but she stayed with her mother, lots of stories like that.

And I'm short circuiting the story now. But, you know, the following year, they called me from Germany. And they opened a street. They named a street after my grandmother. Did you know that? Did I tell you that? Yeah, in Neuhaus. And I told them that if they do that, I would come with my family and attend the dedication, and we did. And that was last year.

And they had that street there now. And it was quite a thing. And all my cousins were there. It was in all the papers. I have all kinds of newspaper articles from Germany and everything. And--

Why did they name the street after your grandmother?

Well, my grandfather and my great grandfather already owned the flour mill in this village, Neuhaus. And they were the major employers there. And my grandfather, my grandmother's husband, died before the First World War. And she had a German guy, an associate, and her son in the business. But she was a very wealthy lady, and she was very generous.

And then they were very, very mean to her. My father, they tried to get her to leave. But she wouldn't leave. And eventually, she went to Theresienstadt. And she perished there.

And her son was there too. And he died in Auschwitz. You know, the Museum have the letters and everything. And other son, we don't know where he died. He was sent to Bergen-Belsen and was probably sent to Auschwitz too, but he died too. So those are my uncles.

And in Paderborn today, they have a Holocaust Memorial. And all their names are on there. And I have pictures of all that.

And so in that sense, I'm connected with it, very much so. When we were in Germany last year, and I was there with my wife and my children-- and everybody was there. And my cousins were all there. All from my grandmother's children, they were descendants. Even my brother took his son.

And they had a HaShoah service at the synagogue there. And you know, they didn't even have a rabbi. They had a Catholic guy doing some-- they had a couple of guys and myself that could do a little davening, say a little bit of Kaddish and stuff like that. No Jews. But the place was filled. All the Germans were there. And they read all the names of all the people that got killed, a boy and a girl read it. I was very moved by that, the names and ages.

So the Germans today, officially, are trying to do something. Not that I'm sticking up for the Germans or anything. But it makes you feel good that it's not totally forgotten in Germany. I still get a lot of literature from Hanover, from Paderborn, from everybody. They've written up histories of our family and histories of the Jewish people, all kinds of books and stuff like that on the pictures.

To get back to where we were in time, so it's the late '30s. And war breaks out September '39.

Yeah, like I said, it was probably in '39 when my father-- a month or two, maybe a month, six weeks before my father and my brother got to England. And then--

Your mother stayed in the United States?

My mother stayed. And we tried everything, the relatives, and wrote letters to Congress to get her visa, get her some kind of a permit to stay. Nothing worked. The government didn't want to help the Jews.

So the only thing that she could do, she had a cousin, on of my grandmother's brother, another brother of my grandmother's-- these families, these Jewish families in Germany at the turn of the century were huge, huge. 12 children was nothing. And this was Bernard Schuster. And we knew this. He was living in El Paso. So he had a house there. So my mother went to El Paso.

And the idea was that she went to the consulate in Juarez and made an application for a permanent number. But she had to have legal residence in Mexico. So she got an address in Mexico. But she didn't really stay there. She stayed really in her cousin's house. And once a month, I think, she walked across the Rio Grande, across the bridge, and reported to the consul. And she had to stay there several years till her number was called. And in the meantime, the war was going on. In the meantime, I was drafted. Now, I was down in El Paso, and I visited her, of course.

Well, so you continued to work in Albuquerque.

Sure.

And then, what was--

I had an important job. I was making a good living.

What was the next change?

Well, I was drafted.

When was that?

It was about three or four months before Pearl Harbor in 1941. December 7th, it was in '41. And I got my draft notice. I had signed up for my first papers. You know, I hadn't done my citizenship yet. And then I went to the draft board.

And the lady again-- maybe my manipulation. I haven't changed, I guess. I'm still that way. The lady told me-- I took my physical and all that in Albuquerque. And I passed all that. And she told me that you can have your number transferred to Washington. I told her that I had a sister in Washington.

By this time, my mother had moved to Washington. She had gotten a visa, and she moved to Washington to my sister. And she says, you can-- and I hadn't seen my sister. I didn't know her husband. I didn't know my brother-in-law. So I had always wanted to go there. So she said you can have your number changed to Washington. And that way it would be about a month later before you actually have to go in, because before they do all that paperwork.

That sounds like a winner to me. I did that. So I agreed to that. But I quit my job. I sold my car. I packed my bags. I brought a lot of presents for my sister and for my mother and stuff, like with a hardware business, radios and toasters and stuff like that. And I bought a bus ticket across the United States to Washington. It was a great, great experience. I never forget it, wonderful.

It took like a week. And I saw the country. And I had a good time. And it was fabulous.

I stopped in Kansas City. There was a place where we were dealing with a Kansas City Steel Company. And they entertained me because I'd been a customer. I'd been buying nails and stuff like that from them. They showed me a time like I never had in my life before. Took me out. And--

Previous to that, what was it like for a 19-year-old, 20-year-old young man born in Germany to read in the newspaper or hear on the radio about the Anschluss in Austria and the invasion of Poland by Germany in September 1939? What were your reactions having been born in Germany?

It was terrible. But there's nothing I can do about it. What can you do about when you read about something that's happening in China? Or in Southeast Asia? Or even maybe in Mexico or in South America?

Did you feel any connection to Germany then having been born there?

Yes. I knew that it was-- but I was out of it. I was here. I was here. I was out of it. I was here.

I guess I went to synagogue. I went out with Jewish girl. But they were American girls. Yeah, I went out with some German people. But we didn't talk about that either.

Was it a feeling that this wasn't your Germany in a sense that was doing these kind of things?

I don't know how to answer that. I don't know. I didn't-- I wouldn't want there. And all I wanted to do was stay in America and fit in here and become an American. That's all. That's the only thing that interested me.

And anyway, I wasn't even thinking of it in cosmic terms. Again, I was just focusing on every day of my life. I was doing my life. It never occurred to me-- I would have gotten, of course, crazy if they would have known that they had taken people and killed them and stuff like that. I didn't even know that when I was in the service. That was very, very, very later in the service I saw it, when I was in the intelligence. Then I really saw everything. And that, of course, changed everything when I saw that.

But again, I just felt so fortunate. And, you know, I still do, because somehow I was able to just get out of all of that stuff. I was saved. I don't know for what I was saved, but I was saved. I was just a lucky guy. Just call me Lucky.

Now you're in Washington. And your number has come up, your draft number.

Yes, and then my draft number. And then I went to New York. I spent a week in New York. And I enjoy-- then I was drafted. And I was in the infantry. And I was sent first to Fort Lee. And then I was sent to Macon, Georgia, Camp Wheeler.

What was it like to put on an American soldiers uniform?

It was great. I was proud of it. I loved every moment of it. No, I loved being a soldier. I didn't love the regimentation by this time. You know, I didn't really love-- I can't say that I loved that so much. But I made friends in the army. And I had a great time.

And then Pearl Harbor came. And it was on a Sunday morning, afternoon, by this time. And I remember I was playing poker. I was in this bunk, in this barracks where I lived. I was downstairs. But I was in this game with these guys upstairs. I was sitting on the bunk. And they heard this come on the radio that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. And I had a full house, three 8s and a pair of kings or something like that. And I had made my bet. And all the guys left and went to the radio.

I said, anybody-- you know, I didn't care about the radio. That's how I was. I was so different. I was out of it. I didn't know, I think. Maybe that came from having been through this in Germany. I had a deaf for this stuff.

And I remember that night, the guys were all crying. You know, I heard them in my bunk, the other soldiers. I couldn't understand it, they were crying, because they knew war was really going to start. And their lives were really going to-- they were aware of it.

I didn't have any kind of feelings. On the contrary, I couldn't wait to get over there and kill Hitler. I didn't have any fear or anything like that at all. Then I heard Roosevelt's speech. And then we were on the drill fields the next day, and they called my name. Oh, my God, I said, KP again. Report to the First Sergeant. So I went and I reported. And I said, you have some books out from the library. You have to take them back, because you're shipping-- hi. That's my wife-- you're shipping out tonight. And I said, oh, my God, what's going on?

So I called home. And I told them I was shipping out. I didn't know where. And then they put me on a train. And I reported. And again, later, I found out why, there was a bunch of-- we wound up after a couple of days shuttling around on the railroad in a field in Florida. And it was an air warning thing, because when the Japs attacked Hawaii, they had a radar there, and it had picked up the planes, but nobody paid attention to it. You remember reading that?

And so the army decided as a crash measure to improve the radar, especially for the East Coast, because they thought then the Germans might attack the East Coast of the United States. The whole world was afraid of Germany.

And why did they take me? Because you have a Form 20 in the army when you first go in. In those days, they clipped it on the corner with holes in it from your IQ test. And because I had such a high IQ test, I was selected-- when you had a certain IQ test to learn about this radar.

Can you believe that? I didn't know where I was, what I was doing. And so anyway, that's why I was in the radar. All of sudden I found myself in the Signal Corps part of the Air Corps.

And then I applied for officer candidate school after I was there for awhile. We called ourselves the Fighting 614. All the guys I was with were a college guys from Princeton and Harvard and really terrific Ivy League types, you know. And they all wanted to become officers. So I did, too. You know, everybody else.

So when I marched out in front of the board, there was like this redneck captain and the lieutenant. They asked me my name. And they found out that I was from Germany. They told me to go outside.

The next day, I was on a train to Jacksonville and I was in the MPs, because there was sensitive stuff. They didn't want a German spies there. That's how they thought, OK? And then I was there in the MPs. And then I volunteered for overseas.

Did the other soldiers give you a hard time because you were from Germany?

Did they what?

Did the other soldiers ever give you a hard time when they heard you were from Germany?

I don't think-- my English was-- I was like an American. I was not any different than anybody else. I had lots of friends. And we worked at night. And we did duty. And we had a great time. I played a lot of tennis. My tennis always-- I played in the finest country clubs in Tampa. It was in Tampa where that was, where I was.

We were stationed in a hotel. It's great. And I just always been lucky.

But then I was in Jacksonville. And that wasn't so nice. So I volunteered for overseas. So I went back to Washington on the train.

Had you gotten your citizenship yet?

Yeah, I got my citizenship while I was in Tampa.

How did you feel about becoming an American citizen?

Oh, that was a great thing, you know. And I found out it was much easier because I had been in service and all. So I went and got my citizenship. Piece of cake. It was nothing to it.

Was it a special day for you?

Huh?

Was that a special day for you?

You know, I kind of took it in stride. My life has been like that. The special days are just another day, another day in the life of Wolfgang Mueller. On March 23 it will be my 50th anniversary-- if I make it. It will be another day, right? Be married to this lady for 50 years.

So you volunteered for overseas duty.

Yeah, I volunteered for overseas duty. And they sent me overseas. And I was on a troop ship. And it was quite an experience. First, you're in a repple depple and all that. And then I was in a troop ship. And you know something, there's not too much else to do, but we gambled, you know. And I got so lucky. I must have won like all the money on the troop ship. I had a money belt and had all my pockets full, everything full. And when I got to England, I took my whole outfit out drinking. And--

What were your thoughts when you returned to England in the uniform of United States Army?

I knew my brother was over there and my father. And I couldn't wait to get to London and get to see him. You know, I wanted to see my father and everything. That's what I did.

Did you get to see him?

Oh, yeah.

What was that like to see him?

Yeah, well, by this time, my father was living with a woman. And my brother had been sent like with the children out in the country to get out of the air raids. And he had just gotten back. He was going to school in England. Oh, yes, and I took my brother-- then I arranged for my brother to come to America. My uniform and my ribbons, I went to Grosvenor Square to the American embassy, and I made all the arrangements. And I took him to Cardiff in Wales. And I put him on the boat. That's how he got to America. And by the time I got home from overseas, he was in service.

So now you're in England. And then what happened? With the military.

Yeah, I'm in England. In the meantime, I've become a non-commissioned officer. And I was an RAF liaison. And our job was-- I was connected with the Air Corps-- and our job was to procure parts from the RAF for American planes. I was in an area, all around us were all the American air bases, the bombing bases. So I met all the guys that were on the airplanes and everything and went out drinking every night. Typical life of an American soldier in England.

And then one day, again, I got notified and I was told to report to London, to the headquarters of the ETO. All the time, after a while they find out something about me.

ETO stands for--

ETO, European Theater of Operations, General Eisenhower's headquarters in the [INAUDIBLE] building. That's a big department store in London, office building. And I went there. And they said that they just found out-- they just figured out from my Form 20 that I knew German. And they needed interpreters.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Wolfgang Mueller. This is tape 2, side B. And you just got your new orders to report in England.

So, again, all of a sudden, I found myself in an incredible environment. All the guys were German Jews like myself, not all of them, but 90% of them. And--

What month, what time span are we talking about?

It was after VE Day. It was after VE Day, but not too long after VE Day. So it had to be-- VE Day, it was--

So we're now in spring of '45.

Yeah.

So the entire time that you were-- up to that, you were in England the whole time. OK. As a liaison to the Royal Air Force, you said.

Hmm?

As a liaison to Royal Air Force.

Yeah, I was in the 8th Air Force. I was just in the 8th Air Force. But I was in what they call a repple depple, replacement depot or parts depot. And I was in the supply. And I became a technical sergeant, you know, five stripes. And I was in charge of a whole office of people and stuff like that, just getting supplies and things.

So you never went on to--

I did what I had to do, doing paperwork.

But at that point you had not been on the continent yet, you were still--

No.

And now it's VE Day--

In London.

And now it's VE Day.

Yeah, VE Day comes and goes. And they need interpreters. And I'm selected to become. And I get orders. I get assigned to this office, Air Technical Intelligence Office of New Staff, United States Air Force headquarters. That was the main office, honey. I was in the headquarters. General Spaatz's headquarters in the Intelligence. And this was the Air Technical Intelligence where they had the pool of interpreters that they sent all over. And I got orders, it said, Tech Sergeant Wolfgang Mueller can commandeer anywhere in the European theater any kind of transportation. He can go anywhere he wants to. He had under a special order, signed General Spaatz. And our office had an office in Paris already and an office in London.

Did you know any of the other German Jewish soldiers at that point?

No, I met them all there but--

They weren't anybody from Hanover--

But, of course, we talked and we've exchanged experiences. And it's all the same, you know. And then--

Were you aware yet at that point of what happened to the Jews by then?

No, not really. Not really. Not really. But I was in an environment then, of all of a sudden-- like, for example, I was stationed right in the West End of London in a gorgeous apartment house, in like a flat. You know, it must be very rich people at one time. And it had been commandeered by the army.

And again, like I had been in Florida, the people I was with were of a different class. And the soldiers that I been with on the air bases, these were all very intelligent guys. We had fabulous conversations, had great dates, you know, went out with great women and stuff like that. And we had a great time.

But the war was still going on. The V2s were already coming to London. There was still a lot going on. And I was-- no, I guess after VE Day, there were-- no VE Day, sure the war was going on. There was a war in Germany, of course. Yeah, the V2s and the V1s were coming. And I was flying into Paris. By this time the army had taken Paris. And--

Go back just one minute. I remember before I went in the service I was in my sister's apartment in Washington. And we were listening to the radio. And we heard about the Battle of Tobruk. And at that time, before that happened, we thought Hitler was omnipotent. He was going to take over the whole world, was a little bit afraid of Hitler at that time as Jews, because it looked like nothing could stop him.

But then one of the greatest celebrations, one of the most elated feelings that I ever had was that night in my sister's apartment when I heard that the English army had defeated Rommel at Tobruk. I thought, I think maybe they really stopped him. The man on the radio said it was very important, because if he would have linked up with Japan and stuff, maybe nobody could stop him anymore. At that time, that was very, very big thing, very big day, very, very big day. I've had a few big days in my life.

Another big day was when I was here in Washington and the Voting Rights bill was passed. And I went down to the Congress. Somehow I got passes. And I went in there. And I saw them vote on that. And that was also a great moment for me. I thought it was a great moment in this country, in the history of the world, that finally, I thought--

And, you know, I always thought it was so terrible what's going on between the Blacks and Jews. My neighbor here and his wife both have numbers on their arms. And they're both dear friends of mine. They're wonderful, wonderful people, the Spiegels. They're very active in the Holocaust Museum.

And we were in the B'nai B'rith together here years ago already. And we had one project. I remember, a civic project. And we were both on the board. One time I was a president, and he was a president of the large. And the project was where we gave a kid in the inner city a citizenship award, like $100 or something, and a certificate. It was one of the things that our lodge did.

And my neighbor, Sam Spiegel, was vehemently opposed to that project because he didn't want to do anything for the Blacks. And you know something, I could never understand how a man that had been through what he had been through, how he could have that kind of an attitude. I didn't let it interfere with my personal feelings towards him, but intellectually, I never could beat that one. But I fought for it, but we always gave him that citizenship award.

I think you feel that way because of your background? Or what you saw as a child? Those posters on the street.

Well, I think the only thing that's important for a person is to be able to stand up for what they really think is right. I think I have learned that a little bit. And I tried to teach that also to my family and my children. I've tried to live that kind of a life.

And I think it's very, very hard. It's also a very hard thing, because, you know, like in this country where we have discrimination here against Black people, for example, or the minorities, all of them-- it's not just in this country. Everywhere. In this country it's so terrible because it's such a free country. And everything else is so great. And still we have that going on. And we have so much of it.

And for a Jew to subscribe to anything like that I think is a most unworthy thing in the world. And most people, if they're-- and we're getting onto something else now, and I feel strongly about that too, and very few Jews do-- most people go along with the program, especially if their job is at stake, their livelihood is at stake. Regardless of whether it's right or wrong, if this is the program, if this is what the establishment expects of you, you better do it, because otherwise you might lose your job. You see what I mean?

Well, you know, the German people, the average people in Germany, that's what they did. The average people in Germany didn't want to go and kill a few Jews. And even the people that were in the army or in the concentration camps and working there, and they did what they were supposed to do, they didn't really want to do that. That was the program. That's what you did.

And human beings are very funny. You know, I've worked in the meat business. And when I was first working in a slaughterhouse and I saw animals and lambs and calves getting killed, it made me sick to my stomach. It didn't take me very long to get used to it.

And when people get treated terrible, pretty soon you don't know that they're people. And for Jews-- now, I'm talking about Jews, about us, OK-- to discriminate against anybody, even Germans, for what they are, to group them together as whole bunch of people, that's a terrible thing, because everybody is one person. And I think that's important. And you've got to remember that. And that's what I believe in.

I don't know why I brought that up. I didn't really want to make a speech. But we got around to that subject. That's what life has taught me. And that's what I think about when I think about all the terrible things that are happening.

Now, you know, it's not finished. You know, terrible things are still going on in Africa, in Asia, in Russia, in South America. If you've done any traveling at all, you know it's so wonderful to be in this country. And we really don't appreciate how good we have it here. But I try not to forget it.

You got to Paris. You're flying to Paris.

Sorry.

You had left England. And then you were sent to Paris, you said, after VE Day.

Yeah. And then I reported to the office there. There was a lot going on there, went to Paris. Also, I visit my relatives in Paris. I found them, you know, the ones that had survived. I had a great time. And I brought them stuff from the PX and stuff like that and became very popular. And very, very nice to me and became very friendly.

And then pretty soon, I was assigned as this interpreter to American engineers and officers that were sent into Germany to check out different technical things that the Air Force was interested in, intelligence matters, also arrest certain German guys that they wanted to bring back, like these space scientists and people like that. So I participated in all those programs. And I made many, many trips into Germany and got all over Germany.

I also got a chance to get into places where had been slave labor camps and where there were still terrible conditions going on. And I was actually on the ground. And I saw what was really had happened. I was in a factory in Nordhaus where they made V2 rockets and stuff like that.

Yeah, we'll talk about that.

It's unbelievable.

We'll talk about that. So your first trip back to Germany was to do what?

What year was that?

No. Your first trip back to Germany--

Afterwards?

No, no, no. During the war, you were in Paris and you said they sent you--

Yeah, almost immediately, very soon. That's what I was there for.

And where did you go in Germany?

I was in Munich. And I was in Goslar. And I was in Brunswick and--

Did you interrogate--

I was in Leipzig. I was in Czechoslovakia. I was in Austria. I was everywhere.

And you are now interrogating Germans for-- this is intelligence work.

Yeah, I was interrogating Germans. Part of my job was interrogating Germans. Part of my job was interpreting documents. And part of my job was driving a Jeep for American officers.

So you're now doing intelligence work.

Right. And--

I'm an interpreter.

And did those people that you were interpreting for know you were Jewish?

I didn't waste any time telling them about it. But I don't think--

I'm talking about the Germans.

Oh, the Germans? Oh and how.

How did they know you were Jewish?

Oh, I told them. They were shaking in their boots when I came. American intelligence officer. Oh, my God, I was at the Rosenthal factory in Selb, in Czechoslovakia. And because the Germans-- actually, I went there without an officer. I was just there with a secretary. It was a Jeep. They sent me there on a special mission, because they wanted me to get certain information.

We had an office in Munich at that time. And because the Germans were doing a lot with ceramics, and a lot was around technical. And one of the interesting things was the prime target, intelligence target, at that time that technical intelligence pursued is the intelligence that the Germans had on the Russians. We were getting ready for the next war already.

And one of the things that was always very important like-- that was very far east. I was in Leipzig too. Always try to get in there before the Russian armies got in there. I was in the place-- what is it? Zeiss and the Zeiss works, all over Zeiss works. Interviewed all the engineers. And then they we couldn't get rid of them. They wanted to go back with us, because the Russians were coming the next day.

What was it like to come back to Germany, put your foot down on German soil?

It was unbelievable. The cities were all destroyed. The people were homeless. The children were hanging around the garbage cans trying to get some food. And you gave a girl an orange, and you could never get rid of her or something like that. And it was incredible.

And, of course, also underneath, the scene that I saw all these DPs. The country was full of DPs and also around all the military posts. And the DPs, and they were so poor, and they were so desperate. And they were trying to find a way. But they were dirty, and they were stinking. And you didn't know to be nice to them or whether to get away from me, you know.

Did you identify with any of them?

No. No, not really. I did in a very abstract way. What could I do? You know, I couldn't-- it was not within my-- I had no way to help anybody. Most of those people that I saw couldn't even speak German. They spoke broken German. They're Eastern European people. It's pathetic kind of a situation, bad, bad, bad, bad.

I remember the only emotional reaction I had be anger when I came back here, because people didn't even seem to care, because all the misery that I've seen, the misery. I felt sorry. I didn't feel anger then at the German people. No, no, no, I don't feel anger. Not at all. I never felt angry with anybody at that time. I just felt sorry, because it's so terrible. It was a devastation. And we were so much better off, because we had everything. And everybody was kowtowing to us. We were big shots.

I told you in Selb, the president of the company was there taking me around. And I was the big shot American. He wanted to give me the whole 100 piece set of Rosenthal porcelain. He couldn't do enough for me. Give me all the information, you know, whatever I wanted to know about and whatever secrets they had, I couldn't even write it all down. They couldn't do nothing.

Again, the people, they were running, they were trying to save their lives. Look, later, I was with my-- how people are-- I was with my family in Germany in the '60s, in '65 I guess. And we rented a car. And my children and my wife, we stopped in a filling station, fill up the car. I had a Mercedes.

And I spoke German to the guy at the filling station to fill up my car. And he could tell the I looked, my family. He says, you're American, aren't you? I said, yes, Deutsch, you know, German. And spricht Deutsch, your German is wonderful, you know. So I said, well, ich bin Deutsche JÃ¼de. I'm a German. I was at the Eastern front. He didn't know a thing. You see? We laughed. We laughed.

When you were interviewing people, when you were doing this intelligence work, did you feel that you had to tell them you were Jewish?

Oh, when it was strictly business, I probably didn't. You know, we talked to psychologists. And we talked to all kinds of people, technical things. I was very busy. Sometimes, it was very difficult for me to interpret. I didn't know the English words, just very technical a lot of the stuff. And a lot of them were very interesting people, you know. And some were Nazis.

What did that do to you to be sitting there talking to a Nazi? Or interpreting for a Nazi?

Nazis, we just arrested them. We made sure that they were arrested. If they weren't some where they were locked up, we saw to it that they were locked up. There were places all over where the Nazis were being kept.

Did you have any gut reactions to being with Nazis?

Just damn Nazis, you know, Nazis. There were all sorts of people. Sometimes I talked to German people that defended their position. And then, of course, I argued with them. But deep down, I saw that everybody is just trying to get by, trying to make a living, get by.

It was Hitler. It was Hitler that did it all. Nobody but Hitler. The rest of them just did what they were told. You can't believe how brutal they were. You can't believe how terrible it was in Germany.

I mean, I know I have people that told me-- I was with my granddaughter in Paderborn three years ago. And we had dinner in this lady's house that is a professor that is writing books about the Jewish families there. And I had been corresponding with her. And that's how I first met my connections, contacts over there. Fantastic lady.

And she invited this man. His name was Dr. Offenberg. He was man in his 80s. And we were talking, and he knew a lot of the Jewish families in Paderborn, my grandparents. He knew my grandfather. And his father had already been an attorney there. And he had himself had been a captain in the Wehrmacht.

And my brother's daughter, my niece, was sitting next to me. And she said to him in English-- he spoke English-- she said, Dr. Offenberg, she said, how was it possible that in a country like Germany people could do things like this? And he said, let me tell you something. He said, when Hitler first came to power, Hindenburg had prostate cancer. The country was in a mess. He was a [GERMAN]. He was an idiot, subaltern. We thought this guy not going to last three months. he was an idiot. He was a rabble rouser. Nobody paid much attention to him.

But then, they were so good and they were so ruthless. I had a friend-- I was actually there when it happened. It was a young man in the district attorney's office. And the Nazi [? bunsens ?] came in with their swastikas and their brown shirts and armbands. They clicked their heels, and they said, Heil Hitler, you see. And this guy didn't raise his hand. So they said to him, don't you know what you're supposed to do? And he answered, nicht mehr langer. That means not much longer now.

Well, he disappeared. And I found out after the war that he was executed. That's all he did. If you showed any attitude that you didn't go along with the program, sister, that was it. That's how they operated. And that's how that whole thing was organized.

That was demagoguery. That was power. They knew how to use that power. They had made up their mind before they started. And Hitler himself personally orchestrated all that. He was the one. The people were terrified.

Let's talk about your journeys to some of these labor camps. Where did you go to?

Nordhausen. I was in Nordhausen and was in another place near Braunschweig too.

Let's talk about Nordhausen. Were you prepared for any of this? Did they give you any background information?

No. They said it was a place where they had made V2 rockets. And the Air Force was interested in it. I was in there with engineers. And they still had people there that were very, very sick. It was really almost before the infantry got there. It was still terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible conditions.

Can you describe Nordhausen?

The smell and, you know, the people, they looked like animals. They looked terrible, in tatters and rags and eyes, and you could see they were dying. And it was terrible.

Did you go up to any of them?

No. I was scared. Nothing I could do. No. I stayed with the program. I stayed with the officers, you know. And everybody-- all the Americans, they couldn't believe it. Nobody could believe what we saw. Nobody could believe it. I couldn't even describe it. You can't describe it. I can't describe it.

And then you think that could be me. What do you think when you see a homeless person in the street? All right, that's a good analogy. You go downtown and you see these people that are laying on these grates or whatever. What do you do? Do you go up and talk to them? You don't, right? And neither did I. I was just like everybody else.

But it was like terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible, something like that could have happened. How is it possible? You don't know.

Did any of them, any other prisoners try to talk to German to you?

No. No. They didn't, no. I didn't have any contact. It was not like that. There was not an opportunity for that. We had to--

How long were you in Nordhausen?

An hour.

Did you go into any of the barracks?

No.

You just went into the factory?

Went into the tunnels. And they had already abandoned the work area. But we got some documents and some things that they needed.

When were you there?

Very, very early, one of my first trips out of Paris.

So this would be what, May '45?

Yeah, '45, late '45.

What other labor camps did you go to?

I don't remember the name. But I was in a place near Brunswick. It was in a field.

What was there?

By this time, the Germans had left. And there was still the stragglers around there. There were still people straggling around. There were already American troops in the area. Terrible condition. Terrible.

Again, were you given any background information, any preparation?

No. No, not really. Not really. Nobody really knew. No nobody had any idea of the dimensions of it. It was just even recently that people knew that there were concentration camps everywhere, hundreds of them. First you thought there was just Dachau and Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen. It was everywhere, everywhere. And everywhere these terrible cruelties were going on, and these terrible, terrible things were happening.

I was in Westphalia in a place after the war where they had a place where the Nazis had taken this whole village. This was for the SS. And they'd made the farmers-- they'd resettled the farmers somewhere in Eastern Germany, promising them better farms. And what they were trying to do, they were trying to create a super race there. They had women there that they were breeding perfect Nazis.

Well, of course, the experiment failed. But then it was in the castle. And the big shots-- and it was something that was actually endorsed directly by the top people, Hitler, you know, whatever the top lieutenants were, Goebbels and whatever. And now, it's a museum. And they had like a guardhouse. And they have all the letters there. And they had all tortures and the prisoners and what they did to them. Unbelievable. And even to this day, nobody knows, because they told me there that when the Allies came, there was a fire and burned a lot of the stuff up towards the end. The Nazis knew to destroy it.

Do you think you were any different when you went into places like Nordhausen and other labor camps, were you any different than another typical American soldier because of your background? Do you think your response was different?

No, I don't think my response was any different. But I think I was different. All the time, I told my buddies, now, more than ever-- and I had already told them that earlier too during the war-- I knew why I'm in the army. I know what I'm fighting for. I've really got something to fight for.

But they said, no, we're right with you. We're fighting for the same thing, they told me. You're not by yourself. My friends told me that. We talked. We drink a beer and we talked about stuff like that. I said, I really-- this is my people, you know.

But, you know, I was also with the other German guys too when we got back to Paris or back to London when we were in the office. And you know something it's a funny thing that it comes up that we never talked about it. We talked about, did you go back to your hometown? Things like that. What did you do? Did you take a gun? Did you kill somebody? You know what I mean? We talked about stuff like that?

Did you go back to Hanover?

They wouldn't let me go. I was in Brunswick, which is very close. And I wanted to go. But I was with this colonel. And I wanted to go to Hanover, which was only about an hour, you know. At night, I was going take a Jeep and I said, I want to see Hanover. No, he says. If you go, I'm going to declare you AWOL. I don't want you to go. You stay right here with me. There are Russians out here, and I don't want you to go.

So I didn't go. I never did get back to Hanover until long after the war. I didn't get back to Westphalia either. That was in the British zone. See? Paderborn and all these places, I didn't get back to many years later.

So you stayed over in Europe for how long?

In where?

In Europe for how long? In the army.

Yeah, I came back in 1946. 1946, I came home.

What did you do in the summer and in the fall of 1945?

Well, I was sent back to England. And then the war was over. And they made me a translator. And I worked in an office above Marble Arch translating German technical documents. And then because I had a lot of time in the ETO and everything-- of course, I spent a lot of time with my father. I sent my brother away ready. My brother was here.

And I applied to get home, you know. What I had a chance to do, the translation center-- oh, my life, I did these things-- they had something in Wright Field, Ohio. And they decided to send me to Wright Field in the service. I was in the service, special kind of accommodations and everything, to go to Wright Field to be a translator there.

What was your rank then?

I was still a technical sergeant. And, of course, I was ready to go right away. I was getting back to America. And I went to Wright Field. I went on a boat, went through New York. I got out at Times Square and I saw Frank Sinatra singing and the women, the girls, screaming.

And then and then I went to Wright Field. And as soon as I got to Wright Field, I applied for my discharge. And they came-- they told us that I was eligible. And they came and they offered me a government job right away. They needed us--

To do what?

Civil service job, to stay there as a translator. And I could have gotten like $100 a week, which was a lot already, and then right away, a civil service rank. But I didn't want any part of it. I wanted to get out and be free. Be free. And I applied for my discharge. And on January 11, 1947, I was discharged.

Why did you want to be free? What did you mean by that?

I didn't like the being in service, of being in the government. I wanted to be on my own and do my own thing.

So where did you go then?

I came to Washington. I stayed with my mother at first. She lived in Washington then. And my brother was already in service.

And first, I took a trip. I hitchhiked on an airplane. I had my uniform still. And I hitchhiked from National Airport all the way to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to different places. And I applied back for my job, that company was working, because as a veteran, I was entitled to get my job back. And they offered me a job. They wanted to make me the manager of the tired apartment in Las Vegas. And I think that job paid $100 a week. And I knew then that cab drivers were making $100 a week in Washington. My mother was here. And I told them I'd let them know.