This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Werner Michel. This is tape two, side A. And you have been telling me about your tour in Japan. When did you leave Japan?

As I recall, I left Japan approximately February 1955. And my next major assignment, in essence, was in New York where I was assigned to the counterintelligence corps detachment there. And I remained there until 1957. And I was integrated into the regular army in the meantime.

And the major significant activity that I participated in there, essentially, was the flight from Hungary of thousands of refugees during the Hungarian uprising of October 1956. And I was in Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where we processed many of these people.

My more specific job was to assure security and counterintelligence coverage for these people so that there would be no problems since we were expecting, possibly, that Hungarian intelligence, which was of course dominated by the Soviets or Soviet intelligence, would use these people coming over here for their own purposes.

Had you wanted to return to service stateside? And did you have any input at all as to where you were assigned?

The way the system works, after approximately three years overseas in peacetime, one comes up for reassignment. And while, during that time, we were allowed to make our preferences known, there was no assurance. And in my case, I really didn't want to go to New York. But that's-- destiny sent me to New York in that case.

And when I was integrated into the regular army as I said before, I was integrated into the infantry. And they were not terribly interested in all of the exotic things I had done before as a linguist and so forth and so on. They wanted me to become an infantry officer. So my next station in August 1957 was Fort Benning, Georgia where I took the infantry course and attended the parachute school at Fort Benning, which I completed in late 1958.

And, once again, I was assigned to Korea. I had another year in Korea then as an operations officer of a infantry regiment and as assistant chief of staff of the 7th division, which was located up North near the Imjin River North of Seoul. It was a very interesting tour marked by a lot of tough and cold weather experiences in the winters in Korea.

And I was very glad to return to this country in the following year in 1959 when I was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. There, again, I became an operations officer of the 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment. And for the next two years, I was with the 82nd Airborne Division. This was interesting because we had numerous exercises and maneuvers including maneuvers in Puerto Rico, and Panama, and all over the United States.

In the fall of 1960, I was then given the opportunity to attend the University of Omaha. And I had for many years worked on trying to obtain a bachelor's degree. And so I was able to attend what they called the final semester program. And I did get my degree and returned to the 82nd Airborne Division. And no sooner had I returned then I was selected for the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

And I left for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in July 1961. And while I was there as a student, I, of course, met students from all over the world, including Austrians, Germans, Israelis. And when I graduated there, I was assigned to the faculty and taught tactics at the Command and General Staff College from 1962 to 1965.

The one significant experience there, or among several that might be of interest here, is that I was asked to sponsor the first German liaison officer appointed to Fort Leavenworth; a German Colonel. And I sponsored him. And it was a very interesting experience, particularly when he found out my background.

He was not the most sympathetic person, who, as I recall, initially admitted that one in referring to the treatment of the Jews, he said, that one should have treated the opponents more correctly. I pointed out to him that the Jews in Germany were not opponents. They had been citizens of Germany. And that took him aback. And over the time that I knew him, I think I was able to point out to him the horror of what Germany had done.

Now, he had served in the German army in World War Two. So he must have known what it was to have that happened. But we became, if not friends, we became good acquaintances. We went horseback riding together. We went to play tennis together. And we played chess against each other. We were always in competition with each other. And it was a very interesting experience.

I was also-- while I was there, I was selected to escort German generals because of my language capability. And I point out that, previously, when I was stationed in New York, I took one of the first groups of Germans in newly organized German Armed Forces on trips through this country.

And that gave me an opportunity to meet these individuals and sort of evaluate what kind of people the Germans were using. And I must say, some of them are very, very fine human beings. However, of course, I wasn't able to tell what they had been before.

How long did you stay in the United States at that time?

In 1965 my tour at Leavenworth as an instructor ended. And I was assigned to NATO to a central Army Group in Germany. And as it turned out, the headquarters was right near Heidelberg, the central Army Group. And we had military housing in Mannheim, which, of course, is not very far from the town of Landau where I was born.

I suppose it's significant that we had French, German, and American personnel on our staff. So, once again, it was a very unusual opportunity to mingle, particularly, with the Germans who I found a very interesting group of people. And I had approximately 18 months there. And before, I was given command of a infantry battalion in the 3rd Division very close to the East German border. And I commanded the 2nd Battalion of the 15th infantry for another 18 months until I was promoted to Colonel.

And I suppose I got to meet some interesting Germans there, one of whom was a German battalion commander and turned out to have been a prisoner of war in a camp in Ingolstadt and I had signed his discharge paper. And he was, evidently, most appreciative of the way we treated him because he has visited us here in the United States on several occasions.

Secondly, I guess, the second point, which is sort of ironic, is that the Germans made me the Honorary Commander of the 353rd Panzer Grenadier Battalion which was co-located with us in Wildflecken, vild-flecken, as it's pronounced in German. And I couldn't help but reflect as the German soldiers passed in review in front of me some of my feelings at that very moment. From Germany then, I went to Vietnam.

I don't want you to leave Germany just yet. I would like you to please expand on what you were just saying about what your thoughts were at the moment that they paraded before you.

Well, I thought I'd-- I could hardly grasp the meaning of this moment when they were pinning this honorary pin on me and parading all these Germans in front of me. And I thought of myself of the time 25 years earlier when I had left Germany on a train in 1936, I guess. And this was '60-- so I guess it was 30 years earlier.

It was '67 when this occurred. And it's early '68 actually, February. And I just-- to me, this was a very overwhelming moment. And I can't really put into words all the wild feelings that went through me as I watched these steel helmeted Germans passing in front of me, saluting me. It was indeed a unusual experience.

I had also made a couple of visits to my hometown with my family. And, of course, as I was to do in many subsequent visits to Germany, I always went to the cemetery and looked at the place where our synagogue had once stood and where there was no simple stone there. But I remember, at one occasion, I stood in front of my grandfather's old home on Konigsstrasse.

And I had my wife and two children with me. And then we heard music. And there was a parade coming down this very street. And for one brief moment when I saw this parade, and they have a number of parades. They call themselves the Flower City-- the Garden City of the Palatinate in Landau. But when I heard that martial music, I had suddenly had

almost a feeling of terror as we had when we saw the stormtroopers.

We used to march down the same street behind similar bands. And it was almost a catharsis for me to go back to this town which now has lost whatever allure it might have had one time. It was just a nasty small town. And I really don't-- really, I've gone back a number of times, but I've had only one other experience which might be interesting.

During a trip many years later when I was in the Office of Secretary of Defense, and I had a day free, and I went back drawn back some reason. And there in the middle of the market square was a black Sergeant, an American Sergeant. And I went up to him and spoke to him in English because I-- and he told me he was stationed in Landau with a unit.

And I asked him where he was from. And he was from North Carolina somewhere. And he asked me where I was from. And I said I'm from this town. And he looked at me and he says, why would anybody want to be in this dumb town? I said I hate every minute here. I have never forgotten this brief interlude with this American Sergeant who was stationed with a hawk anti-missile battalion which was on the outskirts of the town there.

While you were in your hometown, did you see any of your former neighbors or anybody that had been a classmate?

I saw one schoolmate who-- his father had been the chief of police and had been very decent to us. And he-- I have lost track of him now. But I saw him a few times there. He'd become a dentist. And he was a very good person. And he had served in the German army. And his brother had served in the SS. And I saw him a few times, but we really didn't have very much in common.

And I was-- in Landau there is a memorial set up. It's called the Frank-Loebsches house. It's named after the Frank family or Anne Frank's family originally had come from there. And this house was in very bad condition at the end of the war and has been rehabilitated now.

And they've set aside, on the upper floor, several rooms that have the mementos of the Jewish community that was there. So I've gone there on a few occasions. But other than that, and in the cemetery, it's like going on an archaeological expedition almost. There are just no Jews there.

During your tour in Germany this time, who knew you were Jewish? And did you experience any anti-Semitism?

I think it was pretty well-known. As a matter of fact, when I was commander of the battalion, both of my battalion surgeons were Jewish. But, of course, there were no-- there were hardly any Jewish personnel. And we had no services up there in where we were stationed, no Jewish services because there were no Jewish chaplains there in that area.

If there was anti-Semitism, I certainly didn't notice it. Of course, it would have been-- I was a fairly senior officer by that time. And it would probably be difficult for me to have become aware of it in any case. So among my allied colleagues, I can't say that I found any anti-Semitism. I became very friendly with some of the German officers. And they simply didn't bring up the topic very often. But they, certainly, were aware that I was Jewish.

And I must say that they were quite correct. They entertained us in their homes. And we entertained them. And, of course, we had the same mission. We were under NATO. And I went with them to Luxembourg and Brussels where the headquarters of NATO was. But there was no evidence of any overt anti-Semitism.

As a matter of fact, I probably like to point out that I put my daughter in a German school. The American schools were quite substandard there. And one of my German colleagues helped me place my daughter in a German school. And she became bilingual. And she considers this to have been a very important experience, a very defining experience in her life. And she has spoken very often, very favorably, about her experience.

Did you ever at that time, that trip to Germany-- was there ever any acknowledgment from any of the Germans that you met about responsibility for what happened during the war?

I have some German friends that I met during the period when I was there before. And one of them-- he's probably the

last one I have contact with because the others have passed away. He was the head of the Bavarian Senate. And I have known him since 1946. And, as I said, the people we selected to work with us, at least in my small unit, we made absolutely certain that they were not tainted.

This man was in the Catholic youth movement, which was-- well, they weren't overtly-- couldn't overtly oppose the Nazis. They were passive or tried to be passive. And you may have heard of the Scholl sisters or the brother and sister Scholl who were at Munich University who tried to put out some anti-Nazi leaflets and they were be-headed.

And this German that I know was a contemporary of theirs. And he rose up, became a very-- he was a burgermeister of a substantial town, and later on became head of the Bavarian Senate. We have been very close friends since those days. And he has spoken a number of times. As a matter of fact, he and his wife both, one time, when we were talking, his wife said, I will never forget when they came to take this family away in their apartment house in Munich.

And he said, we did nothing. None of us-- We turned away. We didn't want to be-- we were so frightened, and we were so passive. And we didn't find the strength to do anything in those days and she said, I have never forgotten this and it will be with me the rest of my life. And so these people of course have been very unusual as I said, most Germans of the current generation that they thinking Germans I would say would appear that they abhor what the previous generation did.

And, of course, we're now getting into the second generation after the war, not only the first. And then there are many others who the schools do not make a or have not in the past made a very conscious attempt to talk about the quote "guilt" of the German. So it's probably quite human. They want to get away from that. They don't want to be reminded of it constantly.

There is a small minority of Germans who-- the one half of 1% probably-- who still keep this alive. But, I would say the rest of them, just like anyone else that's as if we hear talk about what we did to the American Indians, or to the Blacks, we don't want to be reminded of these things.

When your daughter was in school in Germany did she learn anything about the most recent part of German history? Specifically, did she learn anything about World War II and the Holocaust while she was in school there?

I would say very, very little. Of course, she was in grade school. And it probably wouldn't be fair to make a judgment on that basis. But we had her when I was commanding the battalion. We were in a very remote area and she went into a school. There were only three teachers for eight grades.

And it was a rural, a typical rural school. And most of the children were refugee children from East Germany or from East Prussia. And she really got to see a cross-section of what these people also had to surmount. But I can't make a meaningful judgment on whether they should have had more of a curriculum in grade school. I don't think they probably would have been appropriate.

How long were you in Germany? And where were you signed next?

I left Germany in February 1968 and went to drop my family off here in the United States, and I went directly to Vietnam. I spent a year in Vietnam on the staff in Saigon, most of it, but my position required me to be all over the country. So I got to see all of South Vietnam from North to South and returned. It was a-- professionally-- an important experience.

But it was very sad to see what that country had to go through. And it was also, from the standpoint of warfare, in constant turmoil because our soldiers came and went. And that did not help with an enlightened professional operation I would say. So one learned a great deal of what not to do over there as well as what we should have done.

What were your expectations when you were going to Vietnam before you had actually been there? What did you expect that you would encounter?

Well, I remember, while I was still in Germany, I was asked to address a German-- a group of German officers. They wanted a talk by an American officer on Vietnam. And this is before I left. And I said, I expect that that was somewhat similar or I expected it to be somewhat similar to, in an allegorical sense, to the Thirty Years' War in Germany from 1618 to 1648 when, after the first 20 years, people had forgotten what the war was really about.

And the people who were the real victims were the farmers and the common people. And I have-- I think I was quite correct in that assessment, that to the Vietnamese, I think the ideological purposes had become completely blurred. All they wanted was that-- just leave us alone.

We don't want the Americans here. We don't want the North Vietnamese here. We don't want the South Vietnamese here. We would like to live like human beings. And I think I'm correct in that because the war had been going on, in essence, since the late 1940s. And the French left in 1955. And, in effect, we then, in the eyes of the Vietnamese, we became the heirs of the French, which didn't help us any because the French were considered to be a colonial government.

And, in essence, that's the-- I guess from a human standpoint, would be my assessment that the danger or the terror, or the inability of people to live out their lives was the overriding factor there. Even so, our aim was certainly laudable. We went in there with the very best intentions.

But a democracy should not really get involved in protracted warfare because our Congress is not going to stand for-- I mean, boys from Iowa are being killed somewhere 10,000 miles away for years, and years, and years, at a time. And I think we have learned that lesson. This is why, when we went into Desert Storm, it was over very, very quickly because the generation of military professionals that came out of Vietnam, like Colin Powell, certainly learned that lesson.

Is there anything that sticks out in your mind about your time in Vietnam that you have not mentioned about your experiences in Vietnam that you want to mention now?

No, I think that I've sort of summed it up. The experience in Vietnam, it was, as I said, there were the experiences we had there, and the lives that were lost there are just something which is-- really is something that we have to live with for a long time to come.

And, I think, hopefully, we will not make that error again, as I said. But our political leadership got us into it and wouldn't get us out of it until later on. And the military will do what they're asked to do. And, of course, their advice sometimes wasn't that good either. So there is enough blame to go around, I feel, for everyone.

Where were you assigned next and when?

I was-- I had been told before I went to Vietnam that I would probably not be able to avoid the Pentagon much longer. It's the destiny of anyone who has a military career that, sooner or later, he has to do his penance in Washington. And that happened to me as well. And I was assigned to the army staff in Washington in 1969. And I became Director of Counterintelligence in the Office of the Army, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, which is one of the major staff divisions.

And I was there until 1971. It was very interesting for several reasons. I had been absent from intelligence now since 1957. And this was 1969. So I had been gone 12 years out of intelligence. I'd been back in the infantry. And I came back, and I found that we were involved in civil disturbance intelligence, which was something I hadn't-- and the mission of that, which happened to be in my shop, was the monitoring of our civilian activities when there were civilian unrest which was beyond the capability of local and state authorities.

And this became ever more of an important requirement as the anti-Vietnam demonstrations commenced. And as we had these huge demonstrations here in Washington in the 1960-- well, first of all, in 1968 we had the Martin Luther King riots. And I entered Washington just at that very day when these occurred. And, ironically, I reflected once again.

We had left Germany where I was right on the East German border prepared for any eventuality with the Soviet attack.

And it was relatively quiet there. And I come back. And I enter Washington, and I see smoke trails, and fires, and police, and military people all over the city here. And that was my first impression as I came here to leave for Vietnam.

So when I came back to Vietnam, I, of course, at that time I didn't think I was coming back to take an intelligence assignment. And then, when I came back, I inherited among my responsibilities, this civil disturbance branch which received reports from various agencies on the status of the situation. And, basically, we would report to the army Chief of Staff and to the Secretary of the Army on what the likelihood and probability of the kind of disturbances which might require the military to be committed.

We have to pause so I can flip the tape, just one moment. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Werner Michel. This is tape two, side B. And you had just been telling me about civilian disturbance intelligence which was your assignment. Did you have any problems with that particular assignment in light of your personal history from your childhood in Germany?

None at all because, as a matter of fact, we had a number of Jewish personnel in our office. And I must say, this was only one of the responsibilities. We also had other counterintelligence responsibilities. This was the one that was unusual to me because, as I said, I had been out of intelligence for a number of years. And the army leadership also was very concerned that our activities be legal and proper.

And so when some of these disturbances occurred, we, of course, wanted to be sure we were right. And we also wanted to be sure that we did not commit army troops prior to the president's decision to commit army troops. So we had to have good information on which to base a meaningful and intelligent judgment.

I also bring this up because in 1969, there were allegations that the army had indeed been spying on civilians. And Senator Sam Ervin from North Carolina and his constitutional rights subcommittee ran this inquiry. And I became involved in this on the margin because the secretary of the army set up a board of inquiry to look into the possibilities of violations by the Army Intelligence Command.

And these specific allegations dealt with the Army Intelligence activities surrounding the Democratic National Convention in 1968. I think it was called the Days of Rage. I was not even in the country at that time when this occurred, therefore I suppose they selected me to be on this panel because I was not personally involved. There was no conflict of interest. So I was the military member of this board of inquiry which went to Chicago.

And we interviewed intelligence personnel and persons from other agencies to determine whether there were legitimate grievances. And we found, yes, indeed that there had been some, at the local level, unauthorized activities. But they were not on the floor of the convention as been alleged. At that time, there were also black activists.

Jesse Jackson came through with his mule train. And he took his mule train through a Polish neighborhood, which was probably not conducive to the best kind of situation. And Army Intelligence had offered to protect him. And there was a misunderstanding. They had not watched him. They had offered to protect him because he probably needed more protection than he needed watching at that point. And, in any case, we completed our inquiry and reported to the Secretary of the Army.

Also, I took part, in the, later on, in the establishment of what became known as a Defense Investigative Review Council, which was a civilian control over investigative and counterintelligence activities. I served on the first working group of this organization which was set up to show that there was good civilian control and supervision over these kind of activities.

And it was necessary because the army's civil disturbance intelligence plan was too broad and permitted the collection of too much information on civilians that really wasn't necessary for the accomplishment of the mission. It was important, however, for the army to know when they were committed that they should have adequate information on which to go into Detroit or go into Cleveland so that they would not be completely blind when they went into these places.

However, as a result of our activities on the Defense Investigative Review Council, policies were implemented which set up clear and strict guidelines for the activities of Army, Navy, and Air Force counterintelligence people. And these exist to this day, I believe.

During your time with this work with the Pentagon, you said, from '69 to '71, was also the time of the Kent State shooting. Did that have any impact on what you were doing? Oh the Kent State incident, I would emphasize, is a good example of what can happen when a poorly trained organization gets involved in civil disturbances. These were not army soldiers. These were Ohio National Guard people.

These national guardsmen come on active duty once every two weeks or once a month and are basically citizen soldiers. They were really not adequately trained because, first of all, they should never have had live ammunition for that kind of a mission. They should have had riot training. And this is-- I'm glad you brought this out because this is a very important point. And these people died needlessly who were killed there.

In the professional military, or in the army, and the Navy, and Air Force, they, primarily in the army and the Marine Corps, they do receive riot training. And it's very important that troops understand the limits of what they're allowed to do. And, today, we have many more constraints than existed at that time. And I'm sure that before-- I'm sure that the National Guard too has because I'm aware of the National Guard came up with strong training recommendations as a result of that sort of thing.

Where were you assigned after the Pentagon? Well, in 1971, I was asked to become-- I was interviewed by the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, General Bennett. And I became Director of counterintelligence for the Defense Intelligence Agency. And I completed my-- I became aware that I would never be able to leave intelligence alive. And so I completed my military service there. I had three years in the DIA there and retired from the active military service then in 1 September 1974.

What do you mean you would never be allowed to leave alive?

Well, I was hoping to get back to the infantry because it's in a career pattern which one has to develop. If one has two or three specialties, especially, let's say, in those days, I don't know how it is today, it was not very good for your career. If you-- as a matter of fact, at one time when I would report it here to Washington, initially when I first came back into the infantry, they said, we don't know what happened to your career, but it looks horrible. And if you want to go anywhere in this army, don't you ever get another intelligence assignment.

So I knew when I had gotten two consecutive intelligence assignments, I knew that all hope was lost. And that's what I meant by that. So I became Director of Counterintelligence for the DIA. And the significance of those three years was that-- oh, I escorted some Germans, I escorted the Minister of Defense for Austria on a trip.

But more importantly, I also served on the Intelligence Evaluation Committee. This was during the Nixon administration. And this Intelligence Evaluation Committee was looking into domestic threats to the government. And I reported it to the general counsel of the Department of Defense. Melvin Laird was Secretary of Defense at that time.

And the guidance that I got from Fred Buzhardt who was General Counsel who later on became Counsel to President Nixon. And he said, let's keep them at arm's length. And so I attended these meetings there. And we distanced ourselves from their missions and left that to the FBI and other agencies because they were not appropriate. Most of the missions were not appropriate for the intelligence community within the Department of Defense.

And I, having become quite aware of the limitations on what the military should do while I was serving the army, this was very clear and made clear to me by my superiors in the Office of Secretary of Defense that when I represented the Department of Defense over there that I should be very, very careful not to accept missions, which were not clearly stated as being within the purview of the Defense Department.

There were some, I mean, they had some very unusual requests. What were students doing and that sort of thing. We said, we have no information on that. That's not the Department of Defense and that kind of thing. So I retired then on 1

September 1974 and remained retired for two years.

When you retired, what were your plans for your retirement?

I had absolutely no plans. I was going to write, if anything, and, really, I had worked so hard until the last day that I-- many people prepare themselves much more adequately than I did. And I thought I deserved a little while to get my thoughts together. And I thought perhaps I could write something and do some research. But in retirement, one finds one has less time than before.

You said that you retired for two years. I'd like to know what you did for the two years and I'd like to know what you did after those two years.

In 1974 and '75, if you recall, after Watergate, under Senator Church there was this Church Committee hearings into intelligence activities. And it was decided to President Ford, I believe, issued an executive order-- this is after the demise of President Nixon-- an executive order for intelligence activities to govern all intelligence activities across the spectrum of the government.

Of course, the Department of Defense is one of these activities. And this executive order specified that there was to be an inspector general organized in every cabinet level intelligence activity. In other words, if the Commerce Department undertook intelligence, they had to have an IG. And thus, the Department of Defense was to have an IG also.

At that time, there was no IG, therefore, they directed that the department come up with an Inspector General who would assure the legality and propriety of all intelligence activity and counterintelligence activity of the Department of Defense that would include the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and sundry other activities as well.

The person who was charged with doing that came from the Watergate staff. And he looked around for people to assist him. And somehow someone gave him my name. And he contacted me and I became his deputy in August 1976. And he remained until July '79. And I remained his deputy. And when he left, he arranged and he suggested and recommended that I should be his successor.

So I then became Inspector General for Defense Intelligence. And in 1982, they changed the title. And I became an Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight, which was clearly our mission. The oversight of all intelligence activity to make sure that activities were properly supervised, that they were management controls, that they was a legal review to make certain that these activities could withstand scrutiny.

And that, for instance, if there were any clandestine activities that the senior officials were briefed and gave their approval, and that these were conducted, and were then looked at at several levels. And that was very, very interesting as you can imagine. So I stayed there until 1993. And on the 2nd of April 1993, after 17 years in that job, I retired again.

What have you been doing since? Since that time I've been retired again. I did some volunteering down at the Jewish War Veterans. I haven't been down there in the last couple of months. But other than that, I have monitored the activities of my wife very closely and visit my children in parts of the United States. I have done a few other things. I've participated in seminars on national security and intelligence. I belong to the Army Historical Foundation and activities of that nature, basically. And I'm trying to grow old gracefully while maintaining a little bit of tennis capability.

Over your many years in the service as a civilian and as part of the service you've seen some major changes in the way things have been organized and run. I'd like you, if you could, take a few minutes to reflect on the changes you've seen with respect to the Civil Rights Movement and how that has changed the military and the Women's Movement and how that has changed the military.

Well, I'd like to not limit myself to that alone. But I would like to say that I particularly saw integration in the army. And I'm very proud to say that the United States Army integrated on the orders of President Truman 1949 has provided a splendid and extraordinary opportunity for minority personnel and women as well to participate fully, including Jewish

guys like me.

And, as I probably told you, I never cease to marvel when I was on the staff of-- I was on the staff, of course, of five Secretaries of Defense. I was particularly-- was tremendously impressed with Secretary Cheney. And I'd be sitting at some staff meeting and there he was. And I said, I wonder if they know there's a kid from Landau sitting here. And it's amazing when you looked around at the spectrum of people that no one really wanted to know where the origin, the background, the ethnic makeup. It was a true meritocracy, which is, I think, the highest objective any of us can hope for.

And I would say that the military is probably in the forefront in spite of the warts and things that happen periodically. I think the military as a whole has offered great opportunity, equality of opportunity to minorities, to ethnic groups. They don't care if you're Jewish, or black, or whatever you are. If you can accomplish the task at hand, that's what they're interested in.

Now, that doesn't mean that they're not human beings. There are some awful people of all ethnic backgrounds who are terribly difficult to deal with. And sometimes the system is so constrained that it's difficult to get rid of really unproductive-- people who are unproductive for various reasons; personality that is abrasive, or a man who has a severe psychological problem.

Our system has so many safeguards built into it today that sometimes it's very difficult to make a quick personnel decision. So there are two sides to this coin, but all in all I must say what we have done in the wisdom of our leadership has been tremendous in providing this kind of an opportunity. Does that-- good enough?

You mentioned that you have children. I'd like to know how many children you have and what you told them, if anything, about your life in Germany before coming to this country.

I have two girls. One is here in this area. And the other one lives, as of now, in Augusta, Georgia. And she has two daughters, my two granddaughters. And they are both very much aware of what happened. I've taken them to the cemetery in Landau and shown them, not only the ones who are buried there, but the ones who couldn't be buried there because they died somewhere else.

And they-- both my children feel very Jewish. They're very committed. My granddaughters are very active in B'nai B'rith and in Jewish activities. And I'm very, very pleased with that. And my daughter has sponsored a German daughter in-- Augusta has sponsored a young German student from East Berlin. And she took him to Jewish services and gave him an appreciation of what it means to be Jewish.

And he came from East Germany, where not only they didn't know anything about the Jews, but they didn't know anything about anything. They were kept very much in the dark on other than what had been told to them in East Germany. So, yes, my children are very committed and I'm very, very, very proud of them as well.

How do you think your refugee experience has influenced the choices that you made in your life?

I think, of course, it's had a tremendous effect on me. First of all, of course, I know what it was to be poor, and know what it was to be a refugee, and to live with a family of strangers. I also probably-- it drove me to, particularly, excel in the military. I'm not sure whether it's conscious or subconscious, but it's there. So, in effect, it's had a strong--

It also, I feel a great debt to this country. And I wanted to serve this country. And I know that, particularly when I was younger, I was probably much more-- when one is young one is much more idealistic, but that's what I really wanted to do was to serve as well as I could. And this country has repaid us in many, many ways, probably more than I could have expected.

You said that your experiences from your childhood caused you to want to excel in the military. Can you elaborate what you meant?

Well, I would say that when we left Germany, I particularly felt that the Germans made us all feel like we were

subhumans, that we were an unworthy species, if you will. And I think that's probably what it was, and that Jews couldn't be soldiers, and Jews were cowards, and Jews were everything bad. And I don't know whether, as I said, some of this could well be subconscious.

I probably must have impressed some of my-- when I was an enlisted man-- some of my fellow soldiers that they probably thought I was half crazed because I wanted to be a good soldier. And they wanted nothing to do with the military. They wanted to get out of the military. And here's this mad man who wants to be in the military.

You've done so many things in your life. What do you feel were your greatest accomplishments or your greatest contributions?

That's very difficult to say. But I would say that my experiences gave me an understanding for the underdog. And I don't think I ever forgot that, even during the days when being in counterintelligence was where we had a great deal of authority and power. And later on, when I was Inspector General for intelligence, it always lurked in the back of my mind that our activities in a democracy should not be above the law.

I should be accountable. If I helped in some way to do that-- I report it in my job in the Pentagon, to read too. I reported to the President's Intelligence Oversight Board and to the Secretary of Defense. And I hope that I was able to put jack to both of these gentlemen that we in the department were doing that within compliance with our policies and that they could rest assured that we were doing our very best in that regard.

Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to add or include before we conclude the interview today?

I've said so many things, and so much over this time I can only say no.

I thank you very much. And this concludes the interview, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Werner Michel. Thank you, again.