- 1 00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,640 The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer
- 2 00:00:02,640 --> 00:00:05,260 collection interview with George Leonard, and this
- 3 00:00:05,260 --> 00:00:10,080 is tape three, side A.
- 4 00:00:10,080 --> 00:00:15,120 When you were physically in the camp,
- 5 00:00:15,120 --> 00:00:16,980 did you have an opportunity to see
- 6 00:00:16,980 --> 00:00:19,440 the parachutist cliff or the death steps
- 7 00:00:19,440 --> 00:00:24,840 or that part of the camp that has become notorious?
- 8 00:00:24,840 --> 00:00:27,610
- 9 00:00:27,610 --> 00:00:32,110 The parachutist cliffs doesn't ring a bell,
- 10 00:00:32,110 --> 00:00:34,130 and I feel inadequate--
- 11 00:00:34,130 --> 00:00:38,560 the so-called death steps, sure, I saw them many times,

00:00:38,560 --> 00:00:41,300 and I was familiar with them, although if you

13 00:00:41,300 --> 00:00:44,440 were to ask me right now what quadrant

14 00:00:44,440 --> 00:00:46,340 of the outside of the camp they were in,

15 00:00:46,340 --> 00:00:49,810 I wouldn't be able to answer.

16 00:00:49,810 --> 00:00:52,840 Yeah, I saw them, and I saw people

17 00:00:52,840 --> 00:01:00,400 scrambling over them because of the historic importance.

18 00:01:00,400 --> 00:01:04,050 And later in the game, I saw photographers

19 00:01:04,050 --> 00:01:08,280 from all sorts of news groups and so forth

20 00:01:08,280 --> 00:01:13,350 taking pictures, but not parachutist cliffs.

21 00:01:13,350 --> 00:01:14,730 I just don't remember it.

22 00:01:14,730 --> 00:01:21,295 I remember the road going in the direction of the--

23 00:01:21,295 --> 00:01:24,730 well, I remember that the railroad

24 00:01:24,730 --> 00:01:29,085 station where the freight cars came in

25 00:01:29,085 --> 00:01:31,015 and they'd be taken up to the camp--

26 00:01:31,015 --> 00:01:40,880

27 00:01:40,880 --> 00:01:44,610 if you want to steer me here, you can do so.

28 00:01:44,610 --> 00:01:51,470

29 00:01:51,470 --> 00:01:53,540 Just whatever you were--

30 00:01:53,540 --> 00:01:54,980 remember whatever came to mind.

31 00:01:54,980 --> 00:01:58,160 But if something more comes to mind, you can add it anytime.

32 00:01:58,160 --> 00:02:00,680 That's fine.

33 00:02:00,680 --> 00:02:02,090 I wanted to get back to something

34 00:02:02,090 --> 00:02:05,800 that you had alluded to earlier in the interview, 00:02:05,800 --> 00:02:09,039 and you had talked about the Russians that

36 00:02:09,039 --> 00:02:13,510 were prisoners being very active and being in charge.

37 00:02:13,510 --> 00:02:17,980 How did the different ethnic groups within the camp

38 00:02:17,980 --> 00:02:20,560 get along during the period of time

39 00:02:20,560 --> 00:02:24,110 when the Americans were administering the camp?

40 00:02:24,110 --> 00:02:25,485 During the time that--

41 00:02:25,485 --> 00:02:27,650 Yeah, while you were there.

42 00:02:27,650 --> 00:02:33,260 There were squabbles constantly, and the importance

43 00:02:33,260 --> 00:02:36,860 of the American presence was shown in that.

44 00:02:36,860 --> 00:02:39,550

45 00:02:39,550 --> 00:02:44,950 The camp gradually, as two or three weeks rolled by,

46 00:02:44,950 --> 00:02:47,020 became quieter. 47 00:02:47,020 --> 00:02:49,870 And people went about their business

48 00:02:49,870 --> 00:02:53,930 more to accomplish jobs and so forth.

49 00:02:53,930 --> 00:02:57,740 And you had people in the camp, the healthy ones,

50 00:02:57,740 --> 00:03:05,420 were buckling down to communicating and solidifying

51 00:03:05,420 --> 00:03:09,290 friendships with their own groups and others.

52 00:03:09,290 --> 00:03:15,350 And I think that the only major antipathies

53 00:03:15,350 --> 00:03:20,900 that I remember clearly and was a witness to

54 00:03:20,900 --> 00:03:28,310 were the kapos being set upon by the ordinary inmates

55 00:03:28,310 --> 00:03:30,998 and the Russians against the rest of them--

56 00:03:30,998 --> 00:03:32,540 the Russians against the rest of them

57 00:03:32,540 --> 00:03:35,780 primarily because they wanted to be boss.

58 00:03:35,780 --> 00:03:39,270 They were the biggest group, et cetera.

59 00:03:39,270 --> 00:03:41,285 And the Russians hated the Jews.

60 00:03:41,285 --> 00:03:44,310

61 00:03:44,310 --> 00:03:45,840 There was that, too.

62 00:03:45,840 --> 00:03:47,880 And you had enough of a preponderance

63 00:03:47,880 --> 00:03:49,950 in the rest of it.

64 00:03:49,950 --> 00:03:55,050 Like I said, probably 75% to 95% of the remainder,

65 00:03:55,050 --> 00:03:58,380 outside of the criminals and the Russians, were Jewish.

66 00:03:58,380 --> 00:04:01,480

67 00:04:01,480 --> 00:04:04,810 That's my estimate.

68 00:04:04,810 --> 00:04:07,270 I talked with vast numbers of them

69 00:04:07,270 --> 00:04:10,930 and looked over vast numbers of them.

70

00:04:10,930 --> 00:04:14,650 And I was experienced in coming to the conclusion that this

71

00:04:14,650 --> 00:04:17,230 was primarily, outside of the Russians,

72

00:04:17,230 --> 00:04:18,415 a death camp for Jews.

73

 $00:04:18,415 \longrightarrow 00:04:24,710$

74

00:04:24,710 --> 00:04:32,550 And I'm on good ground here when I

75

00:04:32,550 --> 00:04:36,540 say that not many people know it, or they don't care

76

00:04:36,540 --> 00:04:41,600 to know it, but Hitler was a profound dabbler in the occult.

77

00:04:41,600 --> 00:04:43,570 Did you know that?

78

00:04:43,570 --> 00:04:46,000 And he had someone advising him.

79

00:04:46,000 --> 00:04:49,750 It was a pure nut, I think.

80

00:04:49,750 --> 00:04:56,150 And in this occult, he dabbled with this rather

81

00:04:56,150 --> 00:05:02,830

silly, unsupported information about Jews.

82 00:05:02,830 --> 00:05:07,340 And I really shouldn't carry it any further

83 00:05:07,340 --> 00:05:09,390 than that because what I just said,

84 00:05:09,390 --> 00:05:12,520 I know, but I don't want to say anything I don't really know.

85 00:05:12,520 --> 00:05:20,400

86 00:05:20,400 --> 00:05:24,480 Another thing that you had mentioned before, very briefly,

87 00:05:24,480 --> 00:05:28,760 in passing, was that you looked around and you took it in,

88 00:05:28,760 --> 00:05:30,010 but you didn't process it yet.

89 00:05:30,010 --> 00:05:33,400

90 00:05:33,400 --> 00:05:35,470 My next question has two parts.

91 00:05:35,470 --> 00:05:38,680 How long were you physically in that area?

92 00:05:38,680 --> 00:05:42,310 And how did you begin to process during the time 00:05:42,310 --> 00:05:46,895 that you were there in the camp, in the area around Mauthausen?

94 00:05:46,895 --> 00:05:49,750

95 00:05:49,750 --> 00:05:54,280 I think it was in late July that we were moved to--

96 00:05:54,280 --> 00:05:59,620 mid-late-July, we were moved to Spital am Pyhrn

97 00:05:59,620 --> 00:06:02,890 in the mountains, which, by the way,

98 00:06:02,890 --> 00:06:04,360 was a delightful experience.

99 00:06:04,360 --> 00:06:08,070

100 00:06:08,070 --> 00:06:12,330 So we had something like five to seven weeks, I dare say,

101 00:06:12,330 --> 00:06:14,550 in the Mauthausen area.

102 00:06:14,550 --> 00:06:16,720 I got to add a statement about Spital.

103 00:06:16,720 --> 00:06:25,530 We were billeted in Spital with a rushing mountain river

104 00:06:25,530 --> 00:06:29,100 at the eastern edge of us. 105 00:06:29,100 --> 00:06:31,350 And just to the other side of that eastern edge

106 00:06:31,350 --> 00:06:34,133 were the Russians.

107 00:06:34,133 --> 00:06:35,675 So there was a reason for that, too--

108 00:06:35,675 --> 00:06:40,710

109 00:06:40,710 --> 00:06:43,470 first of all, to prevent the Russians from coming down in.

110 00:06:43,470 --> 00:06:45,570 And secondly, maybe we were going

111 00:06:45,570 --> 00:06:50,250 to use that as a venue ourselves to go out and go east.

112 00:06:50,250 --> 00:06:52,140 But there it was.

113 00:06:52,140 --> 00:06:54,510 I remember I used to be a damn fool.

114 00:06:54,510 --> 00:06:56,310 I did some awfully foolish things.

115 00:06:56,310 --> 00:07:01,020 I used to go all alone onto the road, 00:07:01,020 --> 00:07:04,380 going into their territory, and just take long

117 00:07:04,380 --> 00:07:08,820 walks talking with any Russian soldier who

118 00:07:08,820 --> 00:07:11,040 could speak English.

119 00:07:11,040 --> 00:07:15,990 And I found them to be amiable and ignorant-- ignorant

120 00:07:15,990 --> 00:07:17,460 in the ordinary sense of the word,

121 00:07:17,460 --> 00:07:21,540 meaning not well versed in things.

122 00:07:21,540 --> 00:07:24,320

123 00:07:24,320 --> 00:07:26,000 And I used to hate them.

124 00:07:26,000 --> 00:07:29,870 For one thing, they'd throw hand grenades in the river,

125 00:07:29,870 --> 00:07:31,430 and the trout would come belly up.

126 00:07:31,430 --> 00:07:33,080 And I love trout.

127 00:07:33,080 --> 00:07:35,275 And you just don't do that to trout. 128 00:07:35,275 --> 00:07:40,620

129 00:07:40,620 --> 00:07:45,090 During the five to seven weeks that you were in Mauthausen,

130 00:07:45,090 --> 00:07:51,380 how did you begin to process what you had found in the camp?

131 00:07:51,380 --> 00:07:54,230 You said you just took it in and you didn't process it

132 00:07:54,230 --> 00:07:58,530 when you first arrived, but you were there for weeks and weeks.

133 00:07:58,530 --> 00:08:01,520 How did you begin to deal with the reality of what

134 00:08:01,520 --> 00:08:03,920 you had found?

135 00:08:03,920 --> 00:08:07,160 I started taking notes.

136 00:08:07,160 --> 00:08:11,480 And I don't have them anymore, I'm sure.

137 00:08:11,480 --> 00:08:13,730 I took voluminous notes that I have.

138 00:08:13,730 --> 00:08:15,490 Even if I could find them, I don't even 00:08:15,490 --> 00:08:16,490 think I could read them.

140

00:08:16,490 --> 00:08:21,160 They were taken in such a bad handwriting which I have.

141

00:08:21,160 --> 00:08:24,010

142

00:08:24,010 --> 00:08:28,185 The teachers changed me when I was in kindergarten,

143

00:08:28,185 --> 00:08:31,030 the left to the right.

144

00:08:31,030 --> 00:08:40,450 And when I was in Kitzingen, I really took up the idea of--

145

00:08:40,450 --> 00:08:43,929 Kitzingen was in the 79th Infantry

146

00:08:43,929 --> 00:08:46,150 Division on my way home.

147

00:08:46,150 --> 00:08:50,260 And I had a few weeks there, and I had access

148

00:08:50,260 --> 00:08:52,810 to a typewriter in an office.

149

00:08:52,810 --> 00:08:59,410 And I used to go in three hours a day and try to--

150

00:08:59,410 --> 00:09:01,030 once I started a novel.

151

00:09:01,030 --> 00:09:04,210 Another time I started a non-fiction book.

152 00:09:04,210 --> 00:09:09,580 And I couldn't take it even back then.

153 00:09:09,580 --> 00:09:11,410 Gradually, I just drew off from it.

154 00:09:11,410 --> 00:09:16,120 But in answer to your question, I

155 00:09:16,120 --> 00:09:19,660 processed it by trying to write about it

156 00:09:19,660 --> 00:09:22,930 and collect it in my mind and so forth.

157 00:09:22,930 --> 00:09:25,400 And it just didn't work.

158 00:09:25,400 --> 00:09:30,580 And I tried two or three times over the years to write a novel

159 00:09:30,580 --> 00:09:35,900 or a non-fiction book on the subject, and I can handle--

160 00:09:35,900 --> 00:09:39,620 maybe not like some of the finest writers,

161 00:09:39,620 --> 00:09:43,550 but I can handle fiction and nonfiction 00:09:43,550 --> 00:09:45,560 well enough so that I should have been able to.

163 00:09:45,560 --> 00:09:47,555 But emotionally, I couldn't do it.

164 00:09:47,555 --> 00:09:49,160 I just had to duck off.

165 00:09:49,160 --> 00:09:54,090

166 00:09:54,090 --> 00:09:57,600 You can't avoid processing, because your mind takes over.

167 00:09:57,600 --> 00:10:02,040 Your mind-- your subconscious mind and your conscious mind--

168 00:10:02,040 --> 00:10:05,130 are working all the time.

169 00:10:05,130 --> 00:10:10,800 And you think about things, and you think and think and think.

170 00:10:10,800 --> 00:10:15,480 I had another way to process, and that is I

00:10:15,480 --> 00:10:17,940 got tied up with a girl from Vienna,

172 00:10:17,940 --> 00:10:22,860 a schoolteacher named Bertha [? Bittel. ?] And she--

173 00:10:22,860 --> 00:10:25,650 Phyllis knows about her, so there's no problem.

174

00:10:25,650 --> 00:10:32,790 And Bertha [? Bittel ?] was a product of a Nazi childhood.

175

00:10:32,790 --> 00:10:36,400 But she asked questions and wanted to know,

176

00:10:36,400 --> 00:10:42,430 and it was the fact that she of her background that

177

00:10:42,430 --> 00:10:48,350 led me not to get serious enough to make plans with her.

178

00:10:48,350 --> 00:10:50,930 But at any rate, she wanted to know.

179

 $00:10:50,930 \longrightarrow 00:10:54,470$ She'd ask me questions about it, about the Holocaust,

180

00:10:54,470 --> 00:10:56,310 about Jews.

181

 $00:10:56,310 \longrightarrow 00:10:58,960$ Is it really true that blah, blah, blah, blah?

182

 $00:10:58,960 \longrightarrow 00:11:03,210$ And I'd say, Bertha, and we'd talk about it.

183

00:11:03,210 --> 00:11:06,950 So she spoke good English because one of her subjects

184

00:11:06,950 --> 00:11:10,510 was teaching English.

185 00:11:10,510 --> 00:11:13,920 And I'll tell you something amusing about that.

186 00:11:13,920 --> 00:11:14,594 May I?

187 00:11:14,594 --> 00:11:17,631

188 00:11:17,631 --> 00:11:20,276 I used to go to Vocklabruck to see

189 00:11:20,276 --> 00:11:23,510 her, which is a beautiful town on a little river,

190 00:11:23,510 --> 00:11:24,590 not too far away.

191 00:11:24,590 --> 00:11:26,030 And there was a supply truck that

192 00:11:26,030 --> 00:11:30,980 left our town, particularly of Spital, when I was there,

193 00:11:30,980 --> 00:11:32,660 to go into Vocklabruck.

194 00:11:32,660 --> 00:11:34,880 So I used to hitch rides with them

195 00:11:34,880 --> 00:11:37,620 and see her because I had always-- first of all,

196 00:11:37,620 --> 00:11:40,070 I went with them to do a job and I met her

197

00:11:40,070 --> 00:11:43,480 on the bank of the Vocklabruck River.

198

00:11:43,480 --> 00:11:45,590 From then on, I used to hitch rides with them

199

00:11:45,590 --> 00:11:48,080 and get a ride to see her.

200

00:11:48,080 --> 00:11:50,240 And just before I was about to ship out,

201

00:11:50,240 --> 00:11:53,390 I knew that I was going to-- no, before that,

202

00:11:53,390 --> 00:11:54,890 I knew I was going to--

203

00:11:54,890 --> 00:11:59,530 well, I wanted to see her, and I had no truck.

204

00:11:59,530 --> 00:12:05,720 And I took a jeep, and I overestimated

205

00:12:05,720 --> 00:12:12,015 my sense of worth and power in the company and took the jeep

206

00:12:12,015 --> 00:12:13,890 and went to see her and have a great weekend.

207

00:12:13,890 --> 00:12:15,350

I got back, and

the first sergeant,

of mine and who

208 00:12:15,350 --> 00:12:19,490 who was not a friend

209

00:12:19,490 --> 00:12:22,400 had been behind the whole war and then came up

210

00:12:22,400 --> 00:12:25,940 at the end of the war, said, I'm going

211

00:12:25,940 --> 00:12:28,700 to see that you get shipped out to a group that's

212

00:12:28,700 --> 00:12:31,770 going to Japan.

213

00:12:31,770 --> 00:12:34,000 So I went to the captain.

214

00:12:34,000 --> 00:12:36,640 I said, are you going to let this

215

00:12:36,640 --> 00:12:39,910 happen after we dug foxholes together and everything?

216

00:12:39,910 --> 00:12:41,020 Certainly not, he says.

217

00:12:41,020 --> 00:12:43,360 Tell the sergeant to give you two days' extra duty

218

00:12:43,360 --> 00:12:44,680 and let it go.

219

00:12:44,680 --> 00:12:46,300 So I did that.

220

00:12:46,300 --> 00:12:52,330 But then the outfit I would have been shipped to Japan

221

00:12:52,330 --> 00:12:55,750 went home when the war ended, and they all

222

00:12:55,750 --> 00:12:57,700 got discharged weeks earlier--

223

00:12:57,700 --> 00:12:59,080 just a little sidelight.

224

00:12:59,080 --> 00:13:04,610

225

00:13:04,610 --> 00:13:07,310 I was hoping you could also speak a little bit

226

00:13:07,310 --> 00:13:09,260 about the reactions, not just of yourself,

227

00:13:09,260 --> 00:13:13,100 but of the other Americans that were there, the other GIs,

228

00:13:13,100 --> 00:13:15,830 especially if there were any Jewish GIs.

229

00:13:15,830 --> 00:13:19,760 Did you have any conversations among yourselves

230

00:13:19,760 --> 00:13:24,190 in the face of what you found at Mauthausen?

231 00:13:24,190 --> 00:13:28,690 I don't recall specific conversations

232

00:13:28,690 --> 00:13:32,800 because it just wasn't done.

233

00:13:32,800 --> 00:13:36,250 Even if you worked side by side with somebody,

234

00:13:36,250 --> 00:13:41,020 looking at a bad situation, there might be a quick passing

235

00:13:41,020 --> 00:13:42,220 statement, and that was all.

236

00:13:42,220 --> 00:13:45,280 You just went ahead and worked.

237

00:13:45,280 --> 00:13:47,410 I can tell you, though, according to the factions

238

00:13:47,410 --> 00:13:50,290 I was telling you about that were split

239

00:13:50,290 --> 00:13:56,350 up entirely, a lot of the ASTP guys were more empathetic,

240

00:13:56,350 --> 00:13:56,920 and--

241

00:13:56,920 --> 00:13:59,380 army specialized training, the colleges--

242

00:13:59,380 --> 00:14:01,720

more empathetic and feeling, and knowing how

243

00:14:01,720 --> 00:14:05,570 this fit into the world, et cetera, et cetera.

244

00:14:05,570 --> 00:14:08,338

245

00:14:08,338 --> 00:14:11,650 One of the most selfish lot I found

246

00:14:11,650 --> 00:14:14,980 was the new young kids coming in who would just come in

247

00:14:14,980 --> 00:14:17,710 from replacement depots.

248

00:14:17,710 --> 00:14:23,080 And they hadn't seen much, if any, combat.

249

00:14:23,080 --> 00:14:26,320 And I didn't know them because I was with the captain, mostly,

250

00:14:26,320 --> 00:14:29,590 and they'd be replacing someone in the third platoon, blah,

251

00:14:29,590 --> 00:14:30,120 blah, blah.

252

00:14:30,120 --> 00:14:32,170 And I wouldn't even get to see them much.

253

00:14:32,170 --> 00:14:33,960

If I went to the third platoon, it

254 00:14:33,960 --> 00:14:37,180 was to talk to the sergeant or the lieutenant.

255

00:14:37,180 --> 00:14:39,100 But in Mauthausen, I saw a few of them.

256

00:14:39,100 --> 00:14:46,930 And one of them was a guy who found an SS horse.

257

00:14:46,930 --> 00:14:52,050 And all that was on his mind--

258

00:14:52,050 --> 00:14:54,320 nothing to do with the camp, nothing to--

259

00:14:54,320 --> 00:14:56,640 he could have been anywhere.

260

00:14:56,640 --> 00:14:59,550 He could have been in Maine or Vermont.

261

00:14:59,550 --> 00:15:05,490 He just lived the horse, and he was a very self-centered guy.

262

00:15:05,490 --> 00:15:12,340 And another one, the same type, lived in a house next to me,

263

00:15:12,340 --> 00:15:18,850 and he was a young man who was a fatuous jerk who

264

00:15:18,850 --> 00:15:24,500 would say things to the dentist's daughter like, Hilda,

00:15:24,500 --> 00:15:26,855 Hilda, I'm a Catholic, too.

266

00:15:26,855 --> 00:15:27,730 You know what I mean?

267

00:15:27,730 --> 00:15:32,360

268

00:15:32,360 --> 00:15:34,970 No understanding of the fact that these daughters

269

00:15:34,970 --> 00:15:39,200 and the family lived there right in the shadow of Mauthausen,

270

00:15:39,200 --> 00:15:42,680 and the father probably worked on SS teeth

271

00:15:42,680 --> 00:15:45,170 and so on and so forth and probably pried gold out

272

00:15:45,170 --> 00:15:48,390 of the Jews' teeth, for all I know.

273

00:15:48,390 --> 00:15:50,880 But there was no realization of anything like this

274

00:15:50,880 --> 00:15:53,960 at all, this kind of a mindset.

275

00:15:53,960 --> 00:15:57,350 And there was a lot of that mindset among the young fellows

276

00:15:57,350 --> 00:15:58,010 coming in.

277 00:15:58,010 --> 00:16:01,893

278 00:16:01,893 --> 00:16:03,560 Let me see if I have another group there

279 00:16:03,560 --> 00:16:05,770 that I want to talk about--

280 00:16:05,770 --> 00:16:11,740

281 00:16:11,740 --> 00:16:16,928 replacements, ASTP, the original cadre, and the sociopaths.

282 00:16:16,928 --> 00:16:18,220 I've already talked about that.

283 00:16:18,220 --> 00:16:20,940 I told you about the guy who came up to the line them

284 00:16:20,940 --> 00:16:23,560 up and shot prisoners whenever he could,

285 00:16:23,560 --> 00:16:26,472 [? Wachter, ?] didn't I?

286 00:16:26,472 --> 00:16:29,340 And I told you about [? Labede, ?]

287 00:16:29,340 --> 00:16:31,950 who was a sociopath.

288 00:16:31,950 --> 00:16:36,780 I hate to use that word over and over again, but it fits them. 289 00:16:36,780 --> 00:16:42,750

290 00:16:42,750 --> 00:16:45,300 Aside from the things that were given to you

291 00:16:45,300 --> 00:16:48,720 by some of the people there, did you take any artifacts,

292 00:16:48,720 --> 00:16:50,460 or did-- not just you personally, but did

293 00:16:50,460 --> 00:16:55,020 the other GIs, did they take any artifacts or anything

294 00:16:55,020 --> 00:16:55,660 like that?

295 00:16:55,660 --> 00:16:58,320 And the other part of the same question was--

296 00:16:58,320 --> 00:16:59,400 From the camp, you mean?

297 00:16:59,400 --> 00:17:01,550 From the camp.

298 00:17:01,550 --> 00:17:06,829 There was nothing from the camp to take, really.

299 00:17:06,829 --> 00:17:11,390 I was given a present by a Pole, a cigarette thing.

300 00:17:11,390 --> 00:17:15,710 But I don't imagine that there was much of that that went on.

301

00:17:15,710 --> 00:17:18,079 Who had much personal--

302

00:17:18,079 --> 00:17:18,589 you know?

303

00:17:18,589 --> 00:17:24,020

304

00:17:24,020 --> 00:17:26,569 Did you happen to see the American flag

305

00:17:26,569 --> 00:17:29,120 that some of the women had made for the Americans?

306

00:17:29,120 --> 00:17:30,800 No, it was a surprise to me.

307

00:17:30,800 --> 00:17:31,970 Did you-- you never saw it?

308

00:17:31,970 --> 00:17:34,040 No, that was a surprise to me.

309

00:17:34,040 --> 00:17:39,050 You told me about it or I saw it written or something.

310

00:17:39,050 --> 00:17:40,998 Oh, when you gave me your notes, yeah.

311

 $00:17:40,998 \longrightarrow 00:17:44,830$

312

00:17:44,830 --> 00:17:46,660

In a totally different

00:17:46,660 --> 00:17:49,720 aware of the subcamps, the other camps around Mauthausen,

314

00:17:49,720 --> 00:17:52,100 and did you see any of them?

315

00:17:52,100 --> 00:17:55,690 Yeah, I was aware of quite a few of them.

316

00:17:55,690 --> 00:17:59,290 And I went to Gusen once and found out

317

00:17:59,290 --> 00:18:02,950 that it was a predominantly a work camp, although they did

318

00:18:02,950 --> 00:18:04,330 not have it nice, of course.

319

00:18:04,330 --> 00:18:10,120 But it was a work camp, and the end result there was not death

320

00:18:10,120 --> 00:18:14,950 unless they didn't behave and work, in which case

321

00:18:14,950 --> 00:18:19,150 they might have got shot in the head or the back or something.

322

00:18:19,150 --> 00:18:22,930 There were other camps around, work camps

323

00:18:22,930 --> 00:18:26,470 were of a lighter nature than that and Bertha

00:18:26,470 --> 00:18:30,820 and I used to walk around to one particular camp

325

00:18:30,820 --> 00:18:36,320 because there were a lot of Poles in it

326

00:18:36,320 --> 00:18:41,750 who had accordions and other musical instruments.

327

00:18:41,750 --> 00:18:47,000 And they used to have dances in the evening,

328

00:18:47,000 --> 00:18:50,870 and it became quite a joyous place to go.

329

00:18:50,870 --> 00:18:53,860 Bertha and I used to dance a little bit there.

330

00:18:53,860 --> 00:18:57,700

331

00:18:57,700 --> 00:19:00,880 I don't think I can say anything more about the surrounding

332

00:19:00,880 --> 00:19:04,210 camps except to say that they're just like you read.

333

00:19:04,210 --> 00:19:08,730

334

00:19:08,730 --> 00:19:11,550 Did any military brass

or investigative teams

00:19:11,550 --> 00:19:15,680 come and visit the camp that you're aware of?

336

00:19:15,680 --> 00:19:17,360 Galore.

337

00:19:17,360 --> 00:19:23,210 In the ensuing days and weeks, every sort of group imaginable

338

00:19:23,210 --> 00:19:24,320 came in.

339

00:19:24,320 --> 00:19:28,340 I saw and talked with Red Cross groups.

340

00:19:28,340 --> 00:19:34,220 I saw and talked with other kinds of voluntary groups

341

00:19:34,220 --> 00:19:37,040 giving food and help.

342

00:19:37,040 --> 00:19:43,400 I saw a commission from SHAEF headquarters,

343

00:19:43,400 --> 00:19:47,620 Eisenhower's quarters, come in.

344

00:19:47,620 --> 00:19:51,850 I never had a chance to talk to them, of course.

345

00:19:51,850 --> 00:19:54,580 Then, of course, there were all the repatriation teams

346

00:19:54,580 --> 00:19:57,760 from the different countries.

347 00:19:57,760 --> 00:20:01,900 The camp became very quiet after a few days--

348 00:20:01,900 --> 00:20:05,350 after a few weeks because, when you moved out,

349 00:20:05,350 --> 00:20:08,170 a few vast contingencies--

350 00:20:08,170 --> 00:20:15,160 you would get down to the nub of the still-existing serious

351 00:20:15,160 --> 00:20:16,300 cases.

352 00:20:16,300 --> 00:20:21,360 And I'm trying to think of the second group that

353 00:20:21,360 --> 00:20:23,970 moved out after the Russians.

354 00:20:23,970 --> 00:20:27,690 I think there were some Polish nationals in that group, too.

355 00:20:27,690 --> 00:20:30,330 There weren't necessarily Jews.

356 00:20:30,330 --> 00:20:32,490 And there were some groups who were--

357 00:20:32,490 --> 00:20:34,740 there was a small group there who had fought

358 00:20:34,740 --> 00:20:38,580 and the Russian army but who were Jews.

359 00:20:38,580 --> 00:20:42,280 And they took it on the chin in the camp.

360 00:20:42,280 --> 00:20:48,050

361 00:20:48,050 --> 00:20:52,010 When you say they took it on the chin, you mean during the war

362 00:20:52,010 --> 00:20:56,330 or after, during the period that the Americans were

363 00:20:56,330 --> 00:20:57,740 administering it?

364 00:20:57,740 --> 00:21:00,080 I can't speak about during the war.

365 00:21:00,080 --> 00:21:01,160 I can only speculate.

366 00:21:01,160 --> 00:21:07,460 But after the Americans came in, there were two problems.

367 00:21:07,460 --> 00:21:14,690 The main problem there was that after liberation, they could be

368 00:21:14,690 --> 00:21:21,230 and in some cases were victims of Russian authoritarianism

369 00:21:21,230 --> 00:21:23,060 and hatred.

00:21:23,060 --> 00:21:28,400 What happened before we came in with those Jewish Russian

371

00:21:28,400 --> 00:21:34,130 prisoners, I only heard, and I can speculate

372

00:21:34,130 --> 00:21:38,780 that they were treated badly.

373

00:21:38,780 --> 00:21:43,190 And some of them were thrown over into the Jewish category

374

00:21:43,190 --> 00:21:44,345 and not Russian Jewish.

375

00:21:44,345 --> 00:21:53,420

376

00:21:53,420 --> 00:21:56,750 Two questions have come to my mind.

377

00:21:56,750 --> 00:21:58,820 You mentioned relief organizations

378

00:21:58,820 --> 00:22:01,040 that came to help besides the Red Cross.

379

00:22:01,040 --> 00:22:03,920 Can you remember specifically any other organizations

380

00:22:03,920 --> 00:22:06,050

that came?

381

00:22:06,050 --> 00:22:13,050

It was one big group with

a big name in America.

382

00:22:13,050 --> 00:22:17,150 And I don't recall whether the Ford Foundation existed

383

00:22:17,150 --> 00:22:19,820 then or not or one of those others,

384

00:22:19,820 --> 00:22:22,100 but it was an American group.

385

00:22:22,100 --> 00:22:25,660

Did the Ford

Foundation exist then?

386

00:22:25,660 --> 00:22:26,770

I'm not sure.

387

00:22:26,770 --> 00:22:28,330 I'm sorry.

388

00:22:28,330 --> 00:22:32,260 There was an American, privately-funded foundation

389

00:22:32,260 --> 00:22:34,360

that was there.

390

00:22:34,360 --> 00:22:36,850 There were Jewish groups there.

391

00:22:36,850 --> 00:22:39,720

392

00:22:39,720 --> 00:22:40,530

There were--

393

00:22:40,530 --> 00:22:49,000

00:22:49,000 --> 00:22:51,670 Did any other nation send--

395

00:22:51,670 --> 00:22:55,940 besides repatriation groups, did any other nation

396

00:22:55,940 --> 00:22:58,702 send any assistance to the Americans

397

00:22:58,702 --> 00:23:00,160 in the administration of this camp,

398

00:23:00,160 --> 00:23:01,626 to the best of your knowledge?

399

00:23:01,626 --> 00:23:10,680

400

00:23:10,680 --> 00:23:13,890 My first answer is I didn't see any evidence of it.

401

00:23:13,890 --> 00:23:17,500

402

00:23:17,500 --> 00:23:23,500 The second answer is that there was small amounts of help

403

00:23:23,500 --> 00:23:28,630 from Switzerland.

404

00:23:28,630 --> 00:23:31,500 And you know about the Hafliger case, don't you?

405

00:23:31,500 --> 00:23:33,660 Didn't I tell you about that?

00:23:33,660 --> 00:23:41,640 Some Swiss named Hafliger with the Swiss Red Cross, some weeks

407

00:23:41,640 --> 00:23:45,810 before the war ended, had been sent by the Swiss Red Cross

408

00:23:45,810 --> 00:23:51,960 with seven or nine trucks, Hafliger heading it up,

409

00:23:51,960 --> 00:23:57,272 to go to Mauthausen and do what he could to, quote--

410

00:23:57,272 --> 00:24:00,740 and I have the exact quote upstairs--

411

00:24:00,740 --> 00:24:04,940 do what he could to ameliorate the situation, et cetera.

412

00:24:04,940 --> 00:24:07,520 It became a ridiculous situation.

413

00:24:07,520 --> 00:24:11,310 Nobody expected what would happen at all.

414

00:24:11,310 --> 00:24:13,730 But the commandant tried to surrender

415

00:24:13,730 --> 00:24:18,090 the camp to Hafliger and then Hafliger

416

00:24:18,090 --> 00:24:22,210 had some weird ideas of--

417 00:24:22,210 --> 00:24:27,510 I guess it got to him-- his own ideas

418 00:24:27,510 --> 00:24:30,950 of being a big leader there or something.

419 00:24:30,950 --> 00:24:33,680 And the commandant swore up and down

420 00:24:33,680 --> 00:24:37,370 that he'd give up the camp if only

421 00:24:37,370 --> 00:24:43,260 he'd get grace after the war ended because the war was

422 00:24:43,260 --> 00:24:47,100 approaching an end, et cetera.

423 00:24:47,100 --> 00:24:53,020 None of that worked out, and I think that Hafliger crept away

424 00:24:53,020 --> 00:24:55,870 with his tail between his legs.

425 00:24:55,870 --> 00:24:58,810 But it was a weird situation and a beautiful situation

426 00:24:58,810 --> 00:25:01,660 for someone who has a lot of energy

427 00:25:01,660 --> 00:25:04,360 and a good writer to dig it out and come out 00:25:04,360 --> 00:25:06,310 with a best-selling book, non-fiction.

429 00:25:06,310 --> 00:25:07,270 I'm serious.

430 00:25:07,270 --> 00:25:08,440 It would really go.

431 00:25:08,440 --> 00:25:12,700

432 00:25:12,700 --> 00:25:14,740 Was the liberation of Mauthausen uncovered

433 00:25:14,740 --> 00:25:16,930 by reporters for Stars and Stripes

434 00:25:16,930 --> 00:25:21,490 or any other publication that you were aware of?

435 00:25:21,490 --> 00:25:24,060 Stars and Stripes, certainly.

436 00:25:24,060 --> 00:25:26,740 Someplace upstairs, I've got some stuff on it,

437 00:25:26,740 --> 00:25:31,000 but they're usually superficial and just

438 00:25:31,000 --> 00:25:37,470 revert to the same old stuff of another death camp,

439 00:25:37,470 --> 00:25:39,614 et cetera, has-- 440 00:25:39,614 --> 00:25:43,550 although one of them did make the point

441 00:25:43,550 --> 00:25:45,720 that it was among the worst that they had seen,

442 00:25:45,720 --> 00:25:47,390 but I don't recall who said that.

443 00:25:47,390 --> 00:25:54,050

444 00:25:54,050 --> 00:25:57,500 During your time in Europe, with the fighting and everything

445 00:25:57,500 --> 00:26:00,980 else, how easy or how difficult was it

446 00:26:00,980 --> 00:26:03,844 for you to get your hands on an issue of Stars and Stripes?

447 00:26:03,844 --> 00:26:06,810

448 00:26:06,810 --> 00:26:09,790 During the war-- during our coming across,

449 00:26:09,790 --> 00:26:12,000 we got our hands on nothing.

450 00:26:12,000 --> 00:26:15,720 We were 50 miles ahead of any civilization

451 00:26:15,720 --> 00:26:18,360 that was close to us most of the time.

452

00:26:18,360 --> 00:26:22,140

453

00:26:22,140 --> 00:26:28,140 When we had a week break in Belgium, some of the stuff

454

00:26:28,140 --> 00:26:34,020 came to us, but then we were fairly close to civilization.

455

00:26:34,020 --> 00:26:39,785 In Worms, a little bit, but from Worms on, it was a blank.

456

00:26:39,785 --> 00:26:43,270

457

00:26:43,270 --> 00:26:47,576 No mail came up, no nothing.

458

00:26:47,576 --> 00:26:53,320 Did I tell you about that guy I was going to tell you about?

459

00:26:53,320 --> 00:26:55,960 I started, a few minutes ago, to tell you

460

00:26:55,960 --> 00:26:59,710 about a young man who was in army specialized training

461

00:26:59,710 --> 00:27:06,460 with me-- a very bright guy and normal in every respect,

462

00:27:06,460 --> 00:27:09,670 a decent soldier, et cetera.

463 00:27:09,670 --> 00:27:14,110 But I couldn't understand him, and I'll tell you why.

464 00:27:14,110 --> 00:27:18,190 In the anecdote I told before about coming down the hill

465 00:27:18,190 --> 00:27:21,730 with the smoke bomb in back of us, in front of us,

466 00:27:21,730 --> 00:27:25,840 so that we were pretty well hidden,

467 00:27:25,840 --> 00:27:30,250 when I got to the bottom of the hill, still untouched,

468 00:27:30,250 --> 00:27:34,330 I sank down behind a hedgerow.

469 00:27:34,330 --> 00:27:39,010 And there is this guy, whom we'll call Andy, beside me,

470 00:27:39,010 --> 00:27:43,090 sitting back to the farmhouse.

471 00:27:43,090 --> 00:27:46,060 And I'm looking at the farmhouse through the hedgerow,

472 00:27:46,060 --> 00:27:49,810 and a lieutenant from my company is very foolishly

473 00:27:49,810 --> 00:27:53,560 running up to a window, and he's getting a burp gun 00:27:53,560 --> 00:27:56,560 right in the throat, and he turns around and faces us.

475 00:27:56,560 --> 00:27:59,230 And blood is spurting out, and Andy

476 00:27:59,230 --> 00:28:03,220 is sitting, calmly, in the middle of everything,

477 00:28:03,220 --> 00:28:06,910 opening a C-ration can and eating it.

478 00:28:06,910 --> 00:28:09,150 And I just couldn't believe it.

479 00:28:09,150 --> 00:28:14,300 This falls into the category of what I don't know.

480 00:28:14,300 --> 00:28:22,940

481 00:28:22,940 --> 00:28:27,500 How many persons were still at Mauthausen?

482 00:28:27,500 --> 00:28:30,740 How many survivors were still at Mauthausen

483 00:28:30,740 --> 00:28:34,340 by the time you were sent away to your next stop?

484 00:28:34,340 --> 00:28:42,800

485 00:28:42,800 --> 00:28:45,810 I'll have to guess. 486 00:28:45,810 --> 00:28:47,560 And I'm going to emphasize again that this

487 00:28:47,560 --> 00:28:50,380 is a speculative guess, an educated guess based

488 00:28:50,380 --> 00:28:55,870 upon subtracting so many from the Russian prisoner category,

489 00:28:55,870 --> 00:28:59,110 so many from those who kept on dying, so many

490 00:28:59,110 --> 00:29:01,900 of those who were repatriated in other directions.

491 00:29:01,900 --> 00:29:04,300 The Poles had been in, for example,

492 00:29:04,300 --> 00:29:07,480 and the Ukrainians had been in, repatriating.

493 00:29:07,480 --> 00:29:12,070 I dare say that it must have been down to 4,000 to 6,000

494 00:29:12,070 --> 00:29:13,135 by the time I left.

495 00:29:13,135 --> 00:29:23,540

496 00:29:23,540 --> 00:29:26,170 Is there anything about your experience 497 00:29:26,170 --> 00:29:28,150 with the liberation of Mauthausen

498 00:29:28,150 --> 00:29:30,760 that we haven't covered that still stands out in your mind

499 00:29:30,760 --> 00:29:32,260 that you'd like to discuss before we

500 00:29:32,260 --> 00:29:33,350 go on to the next topic?

501 00:29:33,350 --> 00:29:38,380

502 00:29:38,380 --> 00:29:40,840 I'm sure that 10 minutes after you leave this house,

503 00:29:40,840 --> 00:29:44,190 I'll think of 60 things, but the answer is no.

504 00:29:44,190 --> 00:29:47,920

505 00:29:47,920 --> 00:29:52,090 After you left and you went to your next post

506 00:29:52,090 --> 00:29:54,310 that you've told me about already,

507 00:29:54,310 --> 00:29:58,060 how much longer did you stay in Europe

508 00:29:58,060 --> 00:30:02,150 before being sent back to the States?

509

00:30:02,150 --> 00:30:12,290 I spent until something like the last week in November

510

00:30:12,290 --> 00:30:15,620 in the 79th division in Kitzingen.

511

00:30:15,620 --> 00:30:20,780 And suddenly, I was put in a jeep

512

00:30:20,780 --> 00:30:25,310 with a driver who was going to Marseille.

513

00:30:25,310 --> 00:30:37,270 And in one fell swoop, he drove in rather cold weather,

514

00:30:37,270 --> 00:30:42,100 in an open jeep, 60, 70 miles an hour,

515

00:30:42,100 --> 00:30:46,660 from Kitzingen down to Marseille.

516

00:30:46,660 --> 00:30:51,850 When I stepped out of that jeep, I was absolutely frozen stiff.

517

00:30:51,850 --> 00:30:53,962 I couldn't move a thing.

518

00:30:53,962 --> 00:30:57,590 Did you ever experience anything like that?

519

00:30:57,590 --> 00:31:00,820

So we boarded the ship in Marseille,

520

00:31:00,820 --> 00:31:04,120 and I was home by December 15 and discharged

521

00:31:04,120 --> 00:31:07,360 within a couple of days.

522

00:31:07,360 --> 00:31:10,023 I'm going to pause now and fix the tape.

523

00:31:10,023 --> 00:31:10,940 We're just about done.

524

00:31:10,940 --> 00:31:14,660 During that period-- this is not relevant, but--

525

00:31:14,660 --> 00:31:16,503 Oh, let me change the tape.

526

00:31:16,503 --> 00:31:17,170 Just one moment.

527

00:31:17,170 --> 00:31:23,940

528

00:31:23,940 --> 00:31:25,950 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

529

00:31:25,950 --> 00:31:28,380 volunteer collection interview with George Leonard,

530

00:31:28,380 --> 00:31:32,490 and this is tape three, side B. And you

00:31:32,490 --> 00:31:37,230 wanted to add a postscript to your comments

532 00:31:37,230 --> 00:31:40,410 about being discharged.

533 00:31:40,410 --> 00:31:45,050 I wanted to tell you what Mauthausen did for me besides,

534 00:31:45,050 --> 00:31:48,530 I think, making a better person out of me in many respects.

535 00:31:48,530 --> 00:31:52,010 As soon as I came home, shortly after December 15,

536 00:31:52,010 --> 00:31:54,920 I started applying for colleges.

537 00:31:54,920 --> 00:31:59,450 I applied to Northeastern and Boston University in Suffolk.

538 00:31:59,450 --> 00:32:02,435 And all three turned me down.

539 00:32:02,435 --> 00:32:05,960 with the word that we're so mobbed with applications

540 00:32:05,960 --> 00:32:10,160 from new returning vets that we can't fit you in.

541 00:32:10,160 --> 00:32:13,370 I could understand it anyway because my stepfather had

542 00:32:13,370 --> 00:32:16,370 died in my senior year of high school,

543

00:32:16,370 --> 00:32:18,650 and I sort of fell apart.

544

00:32:18,650 --> 00:32:22,290 And I got some grades that I had never been capable of before.

545

00:32:22,290 --> 00:32:24,860 Before that, I had been an excellent student.

546

00:32:24,860 --> 00:32:27,746

547

00:32:27,746 --> 00:32:31,920 To make a long story short, that I immediately

548

00:32:31,920 --> 00:32:35,640 applied to Harvard, and the guy called me.

549

00:32:35,640 --> 00:32:37,245 He says, write an essay.

550

00:32:37,245 --> 00:32:42,980

551

00:32:42,980 --> 00:32:47,340 I don't know why that affects me about your experiences.

552

00:32:47,340 --> 00:32:50,610 And I did, and I was immediately accepted.

553

00:32:50,610 --> 00:32:54,910

So that's what

Mauthausen did for me.

554

00:32:54,910 --> 00:32:58,845 Do you, by any chance, still have that essay?

555 00:32:58,845 --> 00:32:59,920 I never had it.

556 00:32:59,920 --> 00:33:02,170 I didn't make a copy of it.

557 00:33:02,170 --> 00:33:05,250 I did not make a copy of it, and I never got a copy back.

558 00:33:05,250 --> 00:33:10,450

559 00:33:10,450 --> 00:33:15,110 By the way, it was primarily about the administration

560 00:33:15,110 --> 00:33:16,610 of Mauthausen.

561 00:33:16,610 --> 00:33:19,820 And I went into all sorts of group human relational

562 00:33:19,820 --> 00:33:25,040 theories, from the functions of the executive, which

563 00:33:25,040 --> 00:33:26,240 I had been reading.

564 00:33:26,240 --> 00:33:29,310 And I'm sure you read about that, read about that.

565 00:33:29,310 --> 00:33:30,830 And by the way, it was by someone 566 00:33:30,830 --> 00:33:32,990 who had had experience in Tulelake

567 00:33:32,990 --> 00:33:36,980 with the Japanese, which they didn't feel guilty about back

568 00:33:36,980 --> 00:33:38,600 then, but they do, of course, now.

569 00:33:38,600 --> 00:33:41,330

570 00:33:41,330 --> 00:33:49,640 But there were certain administrative policies

571 00:33:49,640 --> 00:33:55,100 that had been brought to light about getting along

572 00:33:55,100 --> 00:33:59,090 with large groups and functioning with large groups,

573 00:33:59,090 --> 00:34:04,050 such as hearing, airing out, and blah, blah, blah, blah.

574 00:34:04,050 --> 00:34:06,740 And I put all this stuff in there, and Harvard loved it.

575 00:34:06,740 --> 00:34:14,090

576 00:34:14,090 --> 00:34:16,280 When you were discharged, what was your rank, 00:34:16,280 --> 00:34:20,090 and what medals and honors had you received?

578 00:34:20,090 --> 00:34:28,239 I had been promised a rating by the captain and by others

579 00:34:28,239 --> 00:34:31,300 toward the end of the war, particularly after my--

580 00:34:31,300 --> 00:34:35,639 what do you call it-- was going through my Bronze Star medal.

581 00:34:35,639 --> 00:34:40,070 And they said that they'd give me

582 00:34:40,070 --> 00:34:45,659 an honorary squad with a rating of staff sergeant or higher.

583 00:34:45,659 --> 00:34:47,219 The captain said this.

584 00:34:47,219 --> 00:34:55,120 And then I took the jeep, and the first sergeant

585 00:34:55,120 --> 00:34:57,332 said that, well, he'd go along with two days,

586 00:34:57,332 --> 00:34:59,290 what do you call it, but under no circumstances

587 00:34:59,290 --> 00:35:02,230 would he back a sergeancy after that. 00:35:02,230 --> 00:35:04,810 So I was on my way home, practically anyway,

589 00:35:04,810 --> 00:35:08,140 and I just shrugged and said, to heck with it.

590 00:35:08,140 --> 00:35:14,800 My honors were the Combat Infantryman Award, three battle

591 00:35:14,800 --> 00:35:17,230 stars, a unit citation--

592 00:35:17,230 --> 00:35:20,830 I think, given by the French or the Belgians, I forget which--

593 00:35:20,830 --> 00:35:27,040 the Bronze Star medal, and the Purple Heart.

594 00:35:27,040 --> 00:35:32,420

595 00:35:32,420 --> 00:35:34,670 When you arrived home, what did you

596 00:35:34,670 --> 00:35:39,330 tell your family and your friends about your experiences

597 00:35:39,330 --> 00:35:42,360 over in Europe, specifically about the liberation

598 00:35:42,360 --> 00:35:44,160 of Mauthausen?

599 00:35:44,160 --> 00:35:46,620 I answered questions, but that's--

600 00:35:46,620 --> 00:35:47,980 and then very limited.

601 00:35:47,980 --> 00:35:49,190 I didn't talk much at all.

602 00:35:49,190 --> 00:35:52,330

603 00:35:52,330 --> 00:35:54,540 I just had the feeling, and I went around

604 00:35:54,540 --> 00:35:59,610 like this for a long, long time, that nobody could possibly

605 00:35:59,610 --> 00:36:01,830 understand anything I said.

606 00:36:01,830 --> 00:36:03,150 They were so far from it.

607 00:36:03,150 --> 00:36:16,480

608 00:36:16,480 --> 00:36:22,030 When you came home, did you have any flashbacks or nightmares

609 00:36:22,030 --> 00:36:23,592 of experiencing that?

610 00:36:23,592 --> 00:36:25,560 No, I had no--

611 00:36:25,560 --> 00:36:30,420 I did not suffer from any problems like that at all. 612 00:36:30,420 --> 00:36:35,370 I did suffer from one thing, a jumpiness, which

613 00:36:35,370 --> 00:36:39,100 I put in one thing I wrote.

614 00:36:39,100 --> 00:36:42,120 I couldn't study.

615 00:36:42,120 --> 00:36:45,300 And I used to go take some books, Harvard books, that I

616 00:36:45,300 --> 00:36:47,490 was supposed to be reading or studying,

617 00:36:47,490 --> 00:36:53,320 and get on a streetcar in Boston and ride forever around,

618 00:36:53,320 --> 00:36:55,510 buying newspapers in one station,

619 00:36:55,510 --> 00:36:59,530 discarding it, buying another newspaper in another station,

620 00:36:59,530 --> 00:37:01,150 doing like that.

621 00:37:01,150 --> 00:37:03,130 And that was one of the best things that

622 00:37:03,130 --> 00:37:08,720 happened to me because I met Phyllis at a streetcar stop

623 00:37:08,720 --> 00:37:12,680 at Coolidge Corner in Brookline.

624 00:37:12,680 --> 00:37:15,123 And Phyllis is-- you referred to Phyllis several times--

625 00:37:15,123 --> 00:37:16,790 would you please tell me who Phyllis is?

626 00:37:16,790 --> 00:37:18,110 My wife.

627 00:37:18,110 --> 00:37:23,170 She's my wife, yeah, coming from a very Jewish family.

628 00:37:23,170 --> 00:37:29,460

629 00:37:29,460 --> 00:37:31,710 You had mentioned very much earlier

630 00:37:31,710 --> 00:37:34,950 in the interview about your aspirations

631 00:37:34,950 --> 00:37:37,710 when you were a child and how the war changed

632 00:37:37,710 --> 00:37:38,460 them a little bit.

633 00:37:38,460 --> 00:37:42,372 When you came home from combat, what

634 00:37:42,372 --> 00:37:44,580 aspirations-- what did you want to do with your life? 635 00:37:44,580 --> 00:37:47,830

636 00:37:47,830 --> 00:37:52,020 My first one was to be a diplomat.

637 00:37:52,020 --> 00:37:55,930 I changed that along the way, and I

638 00:37:55,930 --> 00:37:57,520 don't recall what changed me.

639 00:37:57,520 --> 00:38:01,890

640 00:38:01,890 --> 00:38:03,180 I'll tell you about another.

641 00:38:03,180 --> 00:38:07,590

642 00:38:07,590 --> 00:38:09,770 I wanted to be a diplomat, and I changed along

643 00:38:09,770 --> 00:38:12,230 the way to wanting to be a functionary in a government

644 00:38:12,230 --> 00:38:12,730 agency.

645 00:38:12,730 --> 00:38:15,498

646 00:38:15,498 --> 00:38:17,040 Let me tell you something after that.

647

648

00:38:20,760 --> 00:38:23,590

Yeah, let me ask you a few other questions

649

00:38:23,590 --> 00:38:25,000 that we can put on the record.

650

00:38:25,000 --> 00:38:27,190

Did you follow the

Nuremberg trials?

651

00:38:27,190 --> 00:38:28,470

Yeah.

652

 $00:38:28,470 \longrightarrow 00:38:30,193$

And along those same

lines, with respect

653

00:38:30,193 --> 00:38:31,610

to following the

Nuremberg trials,

654

 $00:38:31,610 \longrightarrow 00:38:34,750$

did you feel that

justice was done?

655

00:38:34,750 --> 00:38:38,117

It was done, but

not enough, yeah.

656

 $00:38:38,117 \longrightarrow 00:38:40,200$

In other words, I thought

that there were probably

657

 $00:38:40,200 \longrightarrow 00:38:43,790$

some fringe people

there that should

658

00:38:43,790 --> 00:38:48,740

have got more than they got.

659 00:38:48,740 --> 00:38:50,730 I don't recall their names right now.

660

00:38:50,730 --> 00:38:55,010 But generally speaking, if I had to say was I satisfied or not,

661 00:38:55,010 --> 00:38:56,440 I'd have to say I was satisfied.

662 00:38:56,440 --> 00:38:59,260

663 00:38:59,260 --> 00:39:00,687 Did you follow the Eichmann trial,

664 00:39:00,687 --> 00:39:02,020 and did you think that was just?

665 00:39:02,020 --> 00:39:08,110

666 00:39:08,110 --> 00:39:13,070 I know I followed it.

667 00:39:13,070 --> 00:39:15,020 Yeah, yes, I thought it was just.

668 00:39:15,020 --> 00:39:23,150

669 00:39:23,150 --> 00:39:26,480 What have you told your family about the things

670 00:39:26,480 --> 00:39:28,040 that you've told me today? 671 00:39:28,040 --> 00:39:30,920 How much of this does your family know, your friends,

672 00:39:30,920 --> 00:39:33,770 or how much of this do you talk about?

673 00:39:33,770 --> 00:39:37,380 This family or my family back from my childhood?

674 00:39:37,380 --> 00:39:37,880 Both.

675 00:39:37,880 --> 00:39:40,400

676 00:39:40,400 --> 00:39:44,750 My family back-- my brothers and sisters and my mother,

677 00:39:44,750 --> 00:39:47,090 et cetera, there was no use.

678 00:39:47,090 --> 00:39:49,970

679 00:39:49,970 --> 00:39:53,810 They had made a polite attempt at listening,

680 00:39:53,810 --> 00:39:55,620 that sort of thing, and blah, blah, blah.

681 00:39:55,620 --> 00:39:58,570

682 00:39:58,570 --> 00:40:05,630 Phyllis, of course, has been a very, very great supporter. 683 00:40:05,630 --> 00:40:11,870 And my kids got caught up in--

684

00:40:11,870 --> 00:40:17,990 from a childish point of view, seeing the box of a Nazi dagger

685 00:40:17,990 --> 00:40:20,780 and all of the stuff, the artifacts I brought back,

686 00:40:20,780 --> 00:40:22,540 and that sort of thing.

687 00:40:22,540 --> 00:40:23,660 And they were caught up.

688 00:40:23,660 --> 00:40:26,450 And when I sold my first novel, I

689 00:40:26,450 --> 00:40:39,050 got a \$2,000 advance, which was a big deal back in 1963 or '65.

690 00:40:39,050 --> 00:40:43,530 And we took the \$2,000 and put it

691 00:40:43,530 --> 00:40:51,300 in a trip with round-trip trip airfare to Amsterdam

692 00:40:51,300 --> 00:40:54,330 and a fully-equipped microbus with camping

693 00:40:54,330 --> 00:40:57,690 equipment and everything for five people

694

00:40:57,690 --> 00:41:01,290 with a tent that zipped on the side and all the stuff.

695

00:41:01,290 --> 00:41:04,500 And we took that for three weeks and went around Europe.

696

00:41:04,500 --> 00:41:09,548 And I found myself following the route of the 11th.

697

00:41:09,548 --> 00:41:13,180

698

00:41:13,180 --> 00:41:17,500 The kids were excited at it, particularly Jeff, my oldest

699

00:41:17,500 --> 00:41:18,400 son, particularly.

700

00:41:18,400 --> 00:41:22,450 He was, like, 14 at the time, I guess.

701

00:41:22,450 --> 00:41:25,640 And we went to Bastogne.

702

00:41:25,640 --> 00:41:32,890 And everyone laughed at seeing the Nuts hot dog stand, "Nuts"

703

00:41:32,890 --> 00:41:35,170 being what McAuliffe had said to the Germans.

704

00:41:35,170 --> 00:41:38,560 When asked to surrender, he said "nuts," a thing like that.

705

00:41:38,560 --> 00:41:50,050

706 00:41:50,050 --> 00:41:55,080 Do you speak publicly about your experiences,

707 00:41:55,080 --> 00:41:57,762 and have you ever been interviewed before?

708 00:41:57,762 --> 00:41:59,610 No.

709 00:41:59,610 --> 00:42:04,590 And why have you decided to do an interview right now?

710 00:42:04,590 --> 00:42:05,880 I didn't decide.

711 00:42:05,880 --> 00:42:07,605 It crept up.

712 00:42:07,605 --> 00:42:08,730 It crept up.

713 00:42:08,730 --> 00:42:12,180 I didn't, any one day, say, hey, I'm going to do an interview.

714 00:42:12,180 --> 00:42:16,440 All of a sudden, Dan said to me that he

715 00:42:16,440 --> 00:42:20,070 had turned my name into the Holocaust Museum

716 00:42:20,070 --> 00:42:24,780 as being someone who had been there and helped

717 00:42:24,780 --> 00:42:27,711 liberate a concentration camp.

718 00:42:27,711 --> 00:42:28,370 Who's Dan?

719 00:42:28,370 --> 00:42:32,670

720 00:42:32,670 --> 00:42:34,920 Lednicer, Dan Lednicer.

721 00:42:34,920 --> 00:42:42,250 He's a very fantastically intelligent man, a Jew,

722 00:42:42,250 --> 00:42:46,640 fervently Jewish, but not religiously so.

723 00:42:46,640 --> 00:42:50,360 And I know you know what I mean by that, culturally, et cetera.

724 00:42:50,360 --> 00:42:55,610 And he just shows brilliance.

725 00:42:55,610 --> 00:42:56,570 He was a chemist--

726 00:42:56,570 --> 00:42:57,290 is a chemist.

727 00:42:57,290 --> 00:43:02,105 And he has turned out three or four tomes that thick--

728 00:43:02,105 --> 00:43:06,230 and they publish them as fast as they get them from him--

729 00:43:06,230 --> 00:43:16,500 on chemistry, chemical solvents and compounds,

730

00:43:16,500 --> 00:43:17,600 and so on and so forth.

731

00:43:17,600 --> 00:43:21,870

732

00:43:21,870 --> 00:43:24,780 I just can't conceive of anyone doing what he does

733

00:43:24,780 --> 00:43:28,020 and remembers it all up here.

734

00:43:28,020 --> 00:43:32,590 Dan is a brilliant guy, and he was

735

00:43:32,590 --> 00:43:36,850 over here a few weeks ago having dinner with us, him and a girl.

736

00:43:36,850 --> 00:43:38,540 We didn't talk about this at all,

737

00:43:38,540 --> 00:43:42,450 but I did tell him that you guys had called

738

00:43:42,450 --> 00:43:45,940 and were going to interview.

739

00:43:45,940 --> 00:43:48,950 When I was called about the interview,

740

00:43:48,950 --> 00:43:52,960 which I didn't expect or know about, particularly--

00:43:52,960 --> 00:43:57,610 I just knew that I was giving testimony of some sort

742 00:43:57,610 --> 00:44:00,370 to the what do you call it--

743 00:44:00,370 --> 00:44:02,620 I shrugged and I thought, well, it's

744 00:44:02,620 --> 00:44:05,210 a good chance for me to see what I know and don't know

745 00:44:05,210 --> 00:44:06,835 and remember or don't remember.

746 00:44:06,835 --> 00:44:09,770 And it's a good chance to see if I

747 00:44:09,770 --> 00:44:11,950 can get through this because I haven't

748 00:44:11,950 --> 00:44:13,000 been able to in the past.

749 00:44:13,000 --> 00:44:23,880

750 00:44:23,880 --> 00:44:27,050 Have you had interviews with others?

751 00:44:27,050 --> 00:44:28,088 Liberators?

752 00:44:28,088 --> 00:44:35,900 00:44:35,900 --> 00:44:41,000 What would you say is the lasting impact

754 00:44:41,000 --> 00:44:44,550 that your experiences had on your life?

755 00:44:44,550 --> 00:44:45,770 The most lasting impact?

756 00:44:45,770 --> 00:44:52,450

757 00:44:52,450 --> 00:44:59,520 The most lasting impact has to do with understanding

758 00:44:59,520 --> 00:45:03,330 what man is capable of.

759 00:45:03,330 --> 00:45:06,290

760 00:45:06,290 --> 00:45:16,410 And that amazes the heck out of me,

761 00:45:16,410 --> 00:45:19,650 and I don't know how to process that.

762 00:45:19,650 --> 00:45:22,900

763 00:45:22,900 --> 00:45:24,360 I don't know what else to say.

764 00:45:24,360 --> 00:45:34,140

765 00:45:34,140 --> 00:45:36,675 How do you react when you hear Holocaust deniers?

766 00:45:36,675 --> 00:45:39,370

767 00:45:39,370 --> 00:45:41,930 How do you react when you hear Holocaust deniers?

768 00:45:41,930 --> 00:45:45,300

769 00:45:45,300 --> 00:45:47,960 It does upset me, of course.

770 00:45:47,960 --> 00:45:49,540 I don't know what to do about it.

771 00:45:49,540 --> 00:45:54,350 I don't think that anyone can do much about it.

772 00:45:54,350 --> 00:45:56,500 If you fight it, you're wrong.

773 00:45:56,500 --> 00:45:58,000 If you don't fight it, you're wrong.

774 00:45:58,000 --> 00:46:04,380

775 00:46:04,380 --> 00:46:07,620 There will be-again, we're talking

776 00:46:07,620 --> 00:46:09,930 about the extent to which people can

777

00:46:09,930 --> 00:46:14,193 be incredibly stupid or bestial or whatnot,

778

00:46:14,193 --> 00:46:15,360 and this is another example.

779

00:46:15,360 --> 00:46:21,960

780

00:46:21,960 --> 00:46:23,980 There is one bit of unfinished business

781

00:46:23,980 --> 00:46:26,770 I wanted to make sure I tied up before we conclude.

782

00:46:26,770 --> 00:46:28,870 You said that you had a seven-week recovery

783

00:46:28,870 --> 00:46:30,140 period after you were injured.

784

00:46:30,140 --> 00:46:32,140 Can you put that in a time frame?

785

00:46:32,140 --> 00:46:35,440 When were you--

786

00:46:35,440 --> 00:46:38,380 I was wounded February 7.

787

00:46:38,380 --> 00:46:44,900 I came back to the company toward the end of March.

788

 $00:46:44,900 \longrightarrow 00:46:47,760$

00:46:47,760 --> 00:46:52,150 And I want to put it on the record that--

790 00:46:52,150 --> 00:46:54,970 I don't know why, but during that time,

791 00:46:54,970 --> 00:46:59,320 the company went through one of the most horrible experiences

792 00:46:59,320 --> 00:47:02,080 that they had gone through to date,

793 00:47:02,080 --> 00:47:05,170 and that was crossing the Kahl River.

794 00:47:05,170 --> 00:47:08,050 I have a picture of the makeshift bridge over the Kahl

795 00:47:08,050 --> 00:47:09,610 River upstairs.

796 00:47:09,610 --> 00:47:12,340 And the reason this was so bad was

797 00:47:12,340 --> 00:47:15,610 that they were exposed, crossing it, wading it

798 00:47:15,610 --> 00:47:23,500 with rifle held up and taking fire with no cease at all.

799 00:47:23,500 --> 00:47:27,100 And that's when my first sergeant that I liked

800

00:47:27,100 --> 00:47:29,380 got the bullet through the hand.

801 00:47:29,380 --> 00:47:34,300 And my being off the line during that period

802 00:47:34,300 --> 00:47:36,355 was, I hate to say this, but a godsend.

803 00:47:36,355 --> 00:47:43,430

804 00:47:43,430 --> 00:47:46,137 Would you be willing to share with me the names of the novels

805 00:47:46,137 --> 00:47:46,970 that you've written?

806 00:47:46,970 --> 00:47:49,720

807 00:47:49,720 --> 00:47:52,330 The first one I named Horn of Plenty,

808 00:47:52,330 --> 00:47:59,940 but Warner Books changed it to Sexmax

809 00:47:59,940 --> 00:48:05,500 because it was a business of helping everyone

810 00:48:05,500 --> 00:48:06,880 through government.

811 00:48:06,880 --> 00:48:11,300 The government filled in what any person 812

00:48:11,300 --> 00:48:13,970 was lacking in this novel.

813

00:48:13,970 --> 00:48:17,090 The other another one was Alien, which I had named originally

814

00:48:17,090 --> 00:48:21,680 The Flying Saucer Murders, which I and my wife liked better.

815

00:48:21,680 --> 00:48:23,990 But Playboy Press decided to make

816

00:48:23,990 --> 00:48:29,480 it Alien to build on the reputation

817

00:48:29,480 --> 00:48:32,150 that the other Alien had had.

818

00:48:32,150 --> 00:48:35,480 Then I wrote a book called Somebody Else Is

819

00:48:35,480 --> 00:48:43,900 On the Moon, which gave me the greatest monetary return

820

00:48:43,900 --> 00:48:45,670 and name and everything else.

821

00:48:45,670 --> 00:48:49,030 It was published in five different languages

822

00:48:49,030 --> 00:48:53,350 and made a French book club, and I was a Japanese fan

823

00:48:53,350 --> 00:48:55,210

club and everything else.

824

00:48:55,210 --> 00:49:00,310 And I'm still living through the reverberations of that.

825

00:49:00,310 --> 00:49:06,760 I decided, after that book, to go into meditation

826

00:49:06,760 --> 00:49:09,050 and find out what life was really all about.

827

00:49:09,050 --> 00:49:10,260 And that's where I am now.

828

00:49:10,260 --> 00:49:16,530

829

00:49:16,530 --> 00:49:20,680 Is there anything else that we haven't discussed

830

00:49:20,680 --> 00:49:22,730 that you would like to add before we

831

00:49:22,730 --> 00:49:24,370 conclude the interview today?

832

00:49:24,370 --> 00:49:27,310 Is there anything that we haven't covered?

833

00:49:27,310 --> 00:49:29,750 I realize, after I leave, you'll come up with 10 things.

834

00:49:29,750 --> 00:49:31,625

But is there anything that comes to your mind

835 00:49:31,625 --> 00:49:33,625 right now that we haven't covered

836 00:49:33,625 --> 00:49:34,750 that you'd like to include?

837 00:49:34,750 --> 00:49:41,870

838 00:49:41,870 --> 00:49:42,370 Yeah.

839 00:49:42,370 --> 00:49:47,460

840 00:49:47,460 --> 00:49:53,200 I'm going to be personal and speculative,

841 00:49:53,200 --> 00:49:54,530 and I'm talking about--

842 00:49:54,530 --> 00:49:58,990 the Holocaust was, in the final analysis, a Jewish story.

843 00:49:58,990 --> 00:50:01,860

844 00:50:01,860 --> 00:50:07,100 You don't deny that, do you, first and foremost?

845 00:50:07,100 --> 00:50:15,900 And I'm thinking that, from a genetic and a practical point

846 00:50:15,900 --> 00:50:20,220 of view, comma-- 00:50:20,220 --> 00:50:25,040 because I am aware of the magnificence

848 00:50:25,040 --> 00:50:29,640 of the Jewish stock, comma--

849 00:50:29,640 --> 00:50:36,380 I'm thinking of the need which

should have started earlier

850 00:50:36,380 --> 00:50:39,290 of breaking out the Jewish gene pool

851 00:50:39,290 --> 00:50:45,680 and having that good blood spread around.

852 00:50:45,680 --> 00:50:46,970 I'm serious about this.

853 00:50:46,970 --> 00:50:49,420 Phyllis knows how I feel.

854 00:50:49,420 --> 00:50:55,590 Yeah, I believe that.

855 00:50:55,590 --> 00:51:00,210

856 00:51:00,210 --> 00:51:02,600 I would like to thank you for doing the interview with me

857 00:51:02,600 --> 00:51:04,280 today, and I know it was difficult

858 00:51:04,280 --> 00:51:08,300 for you, and I personally, and as a part of the museum. 859

00:51:08,300 --> 00:51:09,450 We appreciate it.

860

00:51:09,450 --> 00:51:11,580 Thank you very much.

861

00:51:11,580 --> 00:51:14,080 My daughter got married, and I know you were in the wedding.

862

00:51:14,080 --> 00:51:17,860 This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

863

00:51:17,860 --> 00:51:20,490 interview with George Leonard.

864

00:51:20,490 --> 00:51:22,471