

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,070

2  
00:00:03,070 --> 00:00:05,710  
This is a continuation of  
the United States Holocaust

3  
00:00:05,710 --> 00:00:07,870  
Memorial Museum  
volunteer collection

4  
00:00:07,870 --> 00:00:10,720  
interview with Alan Lukens.

5  
00:00:10,720 --> 00:00:13,150  
This is track number  
two and you were

6  
00:00:13,150 --> 00:00:17,950  
talking about how you've kept  
up with many of the people.

7  
00:00:17,950 --> 00:00:21,790  
Yeah, and not only the Belgian  
I was just talking about.

8  
00:00:21,790 --> 00:00:27,190  
They're a great friend, but two  
others that I particularly met,

9  
00:00:27,190 --> 00:00:32,439  
and one I've been in very close  
touch with them ever since.

10  
00:00:32,439 --> 00:00:44,200  
A Frenchman named Joaquin CotÃ©  
was among a group of French

11  
00:00:44,200 --> 00:00:50,200  
resistance youth in a mountain  
town about half an hour away

12

00:00:50,200 --> 00:00:57,220  
from Geneva, an alpine  
village called Habère-Poche.

13

00:00:57,220 --> 00:01:03,370  
At Christmas of 1943, there  
was a small castle there

14

00:01:03,370 --> 00:01:09,160  
and 35 of these young people,  
mostly men but some girls,

15

00:01:09,160 --> 00:01:11,500  
decided they could  
have a Christmas party.

16

00:01:11,500 --> 00:01:14,830  
The Germans were too  
far away, and that they

17

00:01:14,830 --> 00:01:20,590  
would be safe on Christmas  
Day in this small castle.

18

00:01:20,590 --> 00:01:21,700  
So they had a party.

19

00:01:21,700 --> 00:01:26,680  
Unfortunately, one of--  
there was a Vichyite there

20

00:01:26,680 --> 00:01:30,370  
who heard about this and  
informed the Germans.

21

00:01:30,370 --> 00:01:34,490  
They came up all drunk in  
the middle of the party.

22

00:01:34,490 --> 00:01:38,860  
They killed all but five  
people, burned the Chateau.

23

00:01:38,860 --> 00:01:42,660

Five people played  
dead, but they

24

00:01:42,660 --> 00:01:45,450

were arrested the next day.

25

00:01:45,450 --> 00:01:48,540

One of them was Joaquin CotÃ©.

26

00:01:48,540 --> 00:01:51,210

They were sent  
from camp to camp,

27

00:01:51,210 --> 00:01:55,200

a horrible situation  
all the way through.

28

00:01:55,200 --> 00:01:57,030

Four of them died along the way.

29

00:01:57,030 --> 00:02:00,110

Only Joaquin CotÃ© made it.

30

00:02:00,110 --> 00:02:06,990

I met him in 1995 and because  
of that became great friends.

31

00:02:06,990 --> 00:02:21,250

I went back in 2000 and 2005,  
and in 2009 I guess it was.

32

00:02:21,250 --> 00:02:26,020

Susie and I went over to  
their village and he had died,

33

00:02:26,020 --> 00:02:29,470

but the son has been a very  
close friend ever since.

34

00:02:29,470 --> 00:02:31,360

They stayed with

us in Washington,

35

00:02:31,360 --> 00:02:35,050  
and we went over there,  
went to several services,

36

00:02:35,050 --> 00:02:38,900  
made speeches and  
[INAUDIBLE] and so on.

37

00:02:38,900 --> 00:02:41,410  
We're going to  
see him this year.

38

00:02:41,410 --> 00:02:44,710  
He and his wife  
are close friends.

39

00:02:44,710 --> 00:02:46,640  
That was one story.

40

00:02:46,640 --> 00:02:50,560  
He kept saying, well, I was  
the one that saved his father.

41

00:02:50,560 --> 00:02:54,730  
Well, I didn't,  
because he obviously

42

00:02:54,730 --> 00:02:56,770  
was one of the many survivors.

43

00:02:56,770 --> 00:02:59,710

44

00:02:59,710 --> 00:03:02,410  
Through him there were two  
or three other veterans

45

00:03:02,410 --> 00:03:04,460  
from that village  
that I've seen,

46

00:03:04,460 --> 00:03:09,380

they've given me their  
stories and so on.

47

00:03:09,380 --> 00:03:14,050

Another curious story  
from another friend,

48

00:03:14,050 --> 00:03:21,100

he was on a train in Germany  
being hauled as prisoners

49

00:03:21,100 --> 00:03:23,080

on their way to Dachau.

50

00:03:23,080 --> 00:03:29,050

The train got stuck in a little  
valley between two tunnels.

51

00:03:29,050 --> 00:03:31,810

They were all French on board.

52

00:03:31,810 --> 00:03:34,090

They were afraid that  
they would be attacked

53

00:03:34,090 --> 00:03:36,646

by allied planes who were--

54

00:03:36,646 --> 00:03:38,494

Bombing?

55

00:03:38,494 --> 00:03:42,100

Who were bombing  
German troop trains.

56

00:03:42,100 --> 00:03:45,730

And they tore up  
their clothes and put

57

00:03:45,730 --> 00:03:52,840

on top of the freight car a

red, white, and blue tricolor

58

00:03:52,840 --> 00:03:58,060  
to help the allies spot them.

59

00:03:58,060 --> 00:04:01,360  
And then finally, one of  
these guys that I met,

60

00:04:01,360 --> 00:04:06,520  
he and a Polish friend  
walked back along the tracks

61

00:04:06,520 --> 00:04:08,980  
about two miles  
through the Germans

62

00:04:08,980 --> 00:04:13,060  
to where the Americans were.

63

00:04:13,060 --> 00:04:16,750  
They got a bulldozer  
to go down the tracks,

64

00:04:16,750 --> 00:04:22,450  
open it up, and pull this one  
car back to the American camps

65

00:04:22,450 --> 00:04:27,970  
where they were all, of course,  
welcomed, and eventually

66

00:04:27,970 --> 00:04:29,500  
brought back to life.

67

00:04:29,500 --> 00:04:31,444  
Do you remember his name?

68

00:04:31,444 --> 00:04:34,330  
Yeah, that was [? Fun ?]  
Fred was his name,

69

00:04:34,330 --> 00:04:37,060  
and I went to see  
him in Grenoble.

70  
00:04:37,060 --> 00:04:39,790

71  
00:04:39,790 --> 00:04:42,180  
I think I have more  
names in some of these.

72  
00:04:42,180 --> 00:04:44,750  
If I give you one of these  
you'll have some of it.

73  
00:04:44,750 --> 00:04:46,350  
Yeah.

74  
00:04:46,350 --> 00:04:48,690  
So that was another  
interesting story.

75  
00:04:48,690 --> 00:04:51,960  
But there were-- everybody  
had an interesting story.

76  
00:04:51,960 --> 00:04:57,120  
One of the wonderful people when  
we went back this year in 2010,

77  
00:04:57,120 --> 00:05:01,620  
whom I hadn't met before, but  
had an English wife and he

78  
00:05:01,620 --> 00:05:04,440  
spoke English, because I  
had my son and my grandson

79  
00:05:04,440 --> 00:05:06,420  
along which helped.

80  
00:05:06,420 --> 00:05:11,280  
A wonderful man, and he was

down to 70 pounds or something.

81

00:05:11,280 --> 00:05:13,530

Now he lives in southern France.

82

00:05:13,530 --> 00:05:15,960

But his story was  
really unbelievable.

83

00:05:15,960 --> 00:05:23,070

That every day the  
Germans, the Nazi guards,

84

00:05:23,070 --> 00:05:27,150

would count the number of  
bodies or the number of people

85

00:05:27,150 --> 00:05:31,660

standing, and thereby decide  
how much food would be rationed.

86

00:05:31,660 --> 00:05:34,410

And so so many were dying each  
night that they would carry

87

00:05:34,410 --> 00:05:37,890

the bodies out, stand  
them up, so that there

88

00:05:37,890 --> 00:05:40,950

would be a larger ration.

89

00:05:40,950 --> 00:05:44,720

He's told us that story  
was really extraordinary.

90

00:05:44,720 --> 00:05:45,820

I keep up with him.

91

00:05:45,820 --> 00:05:49,000

He lives in southern  
France, a wonderful man.

92

00:05:49,000 --> 00:05:52,030

You had said in one  
of your articles

93

00:05:52,030 --> 00:05:57,800

when you went back to Dachau  
that you delivered a message

94

00:05:57,800 --> 00:05:59,330

from President Barack Obama?

95

00:05:59,330 --> 00:05:59,900

Yeah.

96

00:05:59,900 --> 00:06:01,290

Can you talk about that, please?

97

00:06:01,290 --> 00:06:02,900

Oh, sure.

98

00:06:02,900 --> 00:06:05,930

That was difficult to get,  
because he had done one

99

00:06:05,930 --> 00:06:09,500

for the other camp.

100

00:06:09,500 --> 00:06:11,780

But I went through my  
good friend Chris Van

101

00:06:11,780 --> 00:06:14,150

Hollen, our Congressman.

102

00:06:14,150 --> 00:06:15,380

Congressman.

103

00:06:15,380 --> 00:06:18,700

And he said he would help.

104

00:06:18,700 --> 00:06:20,030

He did.

105  
00:06:20,030 --> 00:06:23,270  
I wrote a letter to the  
president, backed up

106  
00:06:23,270 --> 00:06:25,910  
by Chris Van Hollen.

107  
00:06:25,910 --> 00:06:31,430  
He kept helping, went to  
the annual baseball party

108  
00:06:31,430 --> 00:06:35,000  
at the George Will's that  
year, and then Biden was there.

109  
00:06:35,000 --> 00:06:37,970  
I asked him to help.

110  
00:06:37,970 --> 00:06:40,250  
I don't know if he ever did.

111  
00:06:40,250 --> 00:06:45,000  
But I kept pushing and  
we didn't get any answer.

112  
00:06:45,000 --> 00:06:48,590  
So I finally got through  
to some White House guy

113  
00:06:48,590 --> 00:06:50,720  
and said oh yeah, he'll do it.

114  
00:06:50,720 --> 00:06:53,780  
And I had suggested  
what he might say, even.

115  
00:06:53,780 --> 00:06:55,730  
Well, finally, at  
the very last minute

116

00:06:55,730 --> 00:06:58,220  
a fax came to the  
hotel in Dachau

117  
00:06:58,220 --> 00:07:01,070  
where I was staying  
that morning.

118  
00:07:01,070 --> 00:07:05,330  
I had already  
worked up my speech

119  
00:07:05,330 --> 00:07:09,290  
by sort of semi quoting him, but  
this time I was able to do it.

120  
00:07:09,290 --> 00:07:13,520

121  
00:07:13,520 --> 00:07:15,990  
So I can actually--

122  
00:07:15,990 --> 00:07:22,370  
but that was sort of a  
last minute exercise.

123  
00:07:22,370 --> 00:07:24,720  
Here is my speech.

124  
00:07:24,720 --> 00:07:32,170  
And see I-- here,  
this is actually,

125  
00:07:32,170 --> 00:07:35,300  
I had written the  
speech, and then

126  
00:07:35,300 --> 00:07:40,950  
I was going to sluff over  
that, or say [INAUDIBLE],,

127  
00:07:40,950 --> 00:07:44,890  
but then finally this is the

message that came in time.

128  
00:07:44,890 --> 00:07:45,880  
So I was able to--

129  
00:07:45,880 --> 00:07:46,770  
From the president?

130  
00:07:46,770 --> 00:07:50,040  
Yeah-- work that in.

131  
00:07:50,040 --> 00:07:52,080  
I think he used  
practically the same speech

132  
00:07:52,080 --> 00:07:55,750  
that he did for Buchenwald.

133  
00:07:55,750 --> 00:07:59,580  
But it was Chris  
Van Hollen in this

134  
00:07:59,580 --> 00:08:02,320  
because they kept  
driving to do something.

135  
00:08:02,320 --> 00:08:03,960  
I had been to a little--

136  
00:08:03,960 --> 00:08:06,300  
I knew Chris fairly well,  
and I'd been to an event

137  
00:08:06,300 --> 00:08:18,340  
here in Chevy  
Chase at one point.

138  
00:08:18,340 --> 00:08:20,050  
This is sort of funny.

139  
00:08:20,050 --> 00:08:23,080  
There's a wonderful Romanian.

140  
00:08:23,080 --> 00:08:25,930  
Do you think the world  
has learned any lessons

141  
00:08:25,930 --> 00:08:28,240  
from the Holocaust?

142  
00:08:28,240 --> 00:08:31,840  
Well, I hope so, and I think the  
museum deserves a lot of credit

143  
00:08:31,840 --> 00:08:33,450  
for keeping it up.

144  
00:08:33,450 --> 00:08:40,030  
I was a wonderful event  
this year, and before also.

145  
00:08:40,030 --> 00:08:41,470  
The 20th anniversary event?

146  
00:08:41,470 --> 00:08:43,990  
The 20th anniversary with the--

147  
00:08:43,990 --> 00:08:47,080  
I suppose they said they  
were 120 veterans there.

148  
00:08:47,080 --> 00:08:51,130  
I really didn't see very  
many, but I guess they were.

149  
00:08:51,130 --> 00:08:56,140  
And then of course  
of all the survivors.

150  
00:08:56,140 --> 00:08:59,380  
We had a very fascinating  
dinner that night,

151  
00:08:59,380 --> 00:09:03,760

and they put us with one of  
the big supporting families

152  
00:09:03,760 --> 00:09:06,695  
of the museum.

153  
00:09:06,695 --> 00:09:09,320

154  
00:09:09,320 --> 00:09:14,320  
Did you talk to any  
survivors from Dachau?

155  
00:09:14,320 --> 00:09:14,950  
That night?

156  
00:09:14,950 --> 00:09:15,450  
Yeah.

157  
00:09:15,450 --> 00:09:19,215  
No, there wasn't anybody that  
had been anywhere near-- well,

158  
00:09:19,215 --> 00:09:20,590  
some had visited,  
a lot of people

159  
00:09:20,590 --> 00:09:22,960  
had visited Dachau, of course.

160  
00:09:22,960 --> 00:09:25,310  
No, I didn't.

161  
00:09:25,310 --> 00:09:26,990  
There wasn't anybody  
else around that

162  
00:09:26,990 --> 00:09:31,250  
had been to Dachau as a  
soldier or as a survivor.

163  
00:09:31,250 --> 00:09:33,960

I mean, plenty of them had visited lately, of course.

164  
00:09:33,960 --> 00:09:34,460  
Yeah.

165  
00:09:34,460 --> 00:09:36,070  
Yeah, yeah.

166  
00:09:36,070 --> 00:09:39,750  
No, there were-- that was a very nice occasion.

167  
00:09:39,750 --> 00:09:43,070  
It was interesting the next morning to hear Jimmy Carter--

168  
00:09:43,070 --> 00:09:43,930  
Jimmy--

169  
00:09:43,930 --> 00:09:44,800  
Bill Clinton?

170  
00:09:44,800 --> 00:09:46,330  
Bill Clinton, it was wonderful.

171  
00:09:46,330 --> 00:09:48,530  
Yeah.

172  
00:09:48,530 --> 00:09:51,560  
Is there any part of the museum that you relate to--

173  
00:09:51,560 --> 00:09:52,310  
Well, you know I--

174  
00:09:52,310 --> 00:09:52,935  
Liberation or--

175  
00:09:52,935 --> 00:09:55,460  
Well, one of the things, we had the three years in Denmark.

176  
00:09:55,460 --> 00:09:58,700  
And I got very involved  
there with Danes.

177  
00:09:58,700 --> 00:10:00,740  
They have a wonderful museum.

178  
00:10:00,740 --> 00:10:07,160  
And one of these, I  
think it was '90--

179  
00:10:07,160 --> 00:10:09,620  
it was 2000, I guess  
when we were there,

180  
00:10:09,620 --> 00:10:13,980  
we ended up with a whole lot  
of Danish veterans, survivors.

181  
00:10:13,980 --> 00:10:16,880  
And actually, were invited for  
a very special thing the night

182  
00:10:16,880 --> 00:10:22,710  
before the big event out in a  
little section of Dachau, where

183  
00:10:22,710 --> 00:10:24,450  
they lit candles.

184  
00:10:24,450 --> 00:10:27,230  
And we were invited, because we  
just happened to meet the Danes

185  
00:10:27,230 --> 00:10:30,510  
and because we'd  
been in Denmark.

186  
00:10:30,510 --> 00:10:34,190  
So I kept up, and then  
in the Holocaust Museum

187

00:10:34,190 --> 00:10:36,655  
they had that wonderful boat--

188

00:10:36,655 --> 00:10:37,280  
The boat, yeah.

189

00:10:37,280 --> 00:10:39,020  
--given there, so I was--

190

00:10:39,020 --> 00:10:42,780

191

00:10:42,780 --> 00:10:47,920  
the other day when I was in  
there I wanted to see it alone,

192

00:10:47,920 --> 00:10:48,920  
just to see it.

193

00:10:48,920 --> 00:10:53,530  
And so I ended up  
going out backwards,

194

00:10:53,530 --> 00:10:55,870  
so I went all the  
way through that way.

195

00:10:55,870 --> 00:10:58,390

196

00:10:58,390 --> 00:11:01,860  
There's a lot more  
to see, and I need

197

00:11:01,860 --> 00:11:03,090  
to get over there more often.

198

00:11:03,090 --> 00:11:04,560  
I should.

199

00:11:04,560 --> 00:11:06,030

I was just wondering  
if you related

200  
00:11:06,030 --> 00:11:09,990  
to the liberation section,  
when the camps were liberated?

201  
00:11:09,990 --> 00:11:12,720  
Yeah, oh yeah, very much so.

202  
00:11:12,720 --> 00:11:14,135  
Whether that strikes a chord?

203  
00:11:14,135 --> 00:11:14,200  
Yeah.

204  
00:11:14,200 --> 00:11:16,075  
And especially Dachau--  
oh, yeah, absolutely.

205  
00:11:16,075 --> 00:11:18,000  
No, I specifically went to that.

206  
00:11:18,000 --> 00:11:19,410  
And I should go  
there more often,

207  
00:11:19,410 --> 00:11:23,610  
it just is always seems  
difficult to get down and park,

208  
00:11:23,610 --> 00:11:25,740  
which [INAUDIBLE] is not.

209  
00:11:25,740 --> 00:11:28,500  
Did your experience  
during the war

210  
00:11:28,500 --> 00:11:30,170  
affect how you  
raised your children?

211

00:11:30,170 --> 00:11:33,460

212

00:11:33,460 --> 00:11:35,710

I don't know, that's  
a hard one to answer.

213

00:11:35,710 --> 00:11:37,300

I mean, I think that we--

214

00:11:37,300 --> 00:11:40,210

they were all part of  
our Foreign Service.

215

00:11:40,210 --> 00:11:43,990

And I don't think  
that they knew much,

216

00:11:43,990 --> 00:11:46,570

but it was all very  
separate from the war

217

00:11:46,570 --> 00:11:47,800

until more recently.

218

00:11:47,800 --> 00:11:52,530

Now, I took my son last year.

219

00:11:52,530 --> 00:11:57,780

Susie couldn't go, but I took  
my son Tim and my grandson Chase

220

00:11:57,780 --> 00:12:05,370

over for the special  
thing in 2010.

221

00:12:05,370 --> 00:12:10,630

And each of them  
wrote about that.

222

00:12:10,630 --> 00:12:19,110

For example, there's an  
article by my son Tim.

223  
00:12:19,110 --> 00:12:19,890  
And than--

224  
00:12:19,890 --> 00:12:24,560  
What was your  
grandson's reaction?

225  
00:12:24,560 --> 00:12:26,420  
He was very impressed.

226  
00:12:26,420 --> 00:12:30,600  
He was at that point  
at Brook School,

227  
00:12:30,600 --> 00:12:33,690  
and now he's at  
University of Vermont.

228  
00:12:33,690 --> 00:12:35,520  
He wrote quite an  
article about it.

229  
00:12:35,520 --> 00:12:39,200  
I think he was very moved by it.

230  
00:12:39,200 --> 00:12:41,000  
It was wonderful to  
have them both there,

231  
00:12:41,000 --> 00:12:44,900  
and then talk to my friend  
[? CotÃ© ?] who came back

232  
00:12:44,900 --> 00:12:45,950  
for this.

233  
00:12:45,950 --> 00:12:50,932  
And for this other  
fellow who had

234  
00:12:50,932 --> 00:12:55,860

[PHONE RINGING] I'm  
trying to think,

235  
00:12:55,860 --> 00:12:59,224  
remember his name right now.

236  
00:12:59,224 --> 00:13:03,120  
It's in one of  
the articles here.

237  
00:13:03,120 --> 00:13:06,910  
Who's now living in  
Provence, who spoke English,

238  
00:13:06,910 --> 00:13:10,870  
so that was good for me.

239  
00:13:10,870 --> 00:13:14,310  
I got it right here somewhere.

240  
00:13:14,310 --> 00:13:18,660  
Did the experience, again,  
that you went through

241  
00:13:18,660 --> 00:13:19,697  
affect your feelings?

242  
00:13:19,697 --> 00:13:21,155  
Of course, you were  
very young, you

243  
00:13:21,155 --> 00:13:22,697  
were only in the  
early 20s obviously?

244  
00:13:22,697 --> 00:13:24,860  
Yeah.

245  
00:13:24,860 --> 00:13:27,510  
Affect you religiously,  
spiritually?

246

00:13:27,510 --> 00:13:29,490  
Did it make you more religious?

247  
00:13:29,490 --> 00:13:33,060  
Again, you were quite  
young at the time, I know.

248  
00:13:33,060 --> 00:13:34,050  
It's hard to say.

249  
00:13:34,050 --> 00:13:37,740  
I was brought up as a  
Protestant Episcopal,

250  
00:13:37,740 --> 00:13:41,490  
and always went to the  
services that they had--

251  
00:13:41,490 --> 00:13:42,530  
But I'm saying--

252  
00:13:42,530 --> 00:13:43,920  
--with the chaplains.

253  
00:13:43,920 --> 00:13:46,620  
--seeing the evil that  
you saw, the boxcars

254  
00:13:46,620 --> 00:13:51,710  
and the crematoriums, did that  
have any influence on you?

255  
00:13:51,710 --> 00:13:54,900  
I don't know, not  
directly I don't think.

256  
00:13:54,900 --> 00:14:00,600  
I have continued to be a  
supporter of the church

257  
00:14:00,600 --> 00:14:03,180  
where I was, wherever  
I was and so on.

258  
00:14:03,180 --> 00:14:07,150  
But it-- I wouldn't say there  
was a direct connection except

259  
00:14:07,150 --> 00:14:07,650  
that--

260  
00:14:07,650 --> 00:14:09,150  
Connection.

261  
00:14:09,150 --> 00:14:11,950  
What are your thoughts  
about Germany?

262  
00:14:11,950 --> 00:14:17,710  
Well, it took me a long time  
to get very enthusiastic

263  
00:14:17,710 --> 00:14:20,140  
about Germans.

264  
00:14:20,140 --> 00:14:22,450  
Maybe it was a  
little bit my father.

265  
00:14:22,450 --> 00:14:25,090  
Both wars he felt the  
same way, pretty much.

266  
00:14:25,090 --> 00:14:27,810

267  
00:14:27,810 --> 00:14:34,110  
But and I learned a little  
bit of German here and there.

268  
00:14:34,110 --> 00:14:37,500  
But one interesting thing  
that I haven't mentioned,

269  
00:14:37,500 --> 00:14:42,000

but I will quickly,  
that first one in '95

270  
00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:45,060  
I sat next to a German  
general at a big dinner

271  
00:14:45,060 --> 00:14:46,710  
the night before.

272  
00:14:46,710 --> 00:14:52,040  
He was the head of the  
medical department,

273  
00:14:52,040 --> 00:14:55,580  
and that was quite a dinner that  
I did get into, or some of us

274  
00:14:55,580 --> 00:14:56,800  
did.

275  
00:14:56,800 --> 00:15:01,480  
Anyway, he asked if I would talk  
to his medical students, men

276  
00:15:01,480 --> 00:15:04,810  
and women, about what happened.

277  
00:15:04,810 --> 00:15:07,340  
I said yes of course I would.

278  
00:15:07,340 --> 00:15:10,720  
So by that time the  
next day or something

279  
00:15:10,720 --> 00:15:12,790  
we went to Salzburg  
for a little thing.

280  
00:15:12,790 --> 00:15:14,560  
I took a train back.

281

00:15:14,560 --> 00:15:16,840

And a day or two  
later a German Colonel

282

00:15:16,840 --> 00:15:21,220

met me at the hotel, which  
still struck me as odd.

283

00:15:21,220 --> 00:15:27,670

Took me out, we had lunch at the  
German headquarters with about

284

00:15:27,670 --> 00:15:31,630

25 officers, and they brought  
up-- that was kind of bizarre--

285

00:15:31,630 --> 00:15:37,038

they found a kid of my  
then age, 21, a private

286

00:15:37,038 --> 00:15:37,830

in the German army.

287

00:15:37,830 --> 00:15:40,780

And kind of made him sit  
there to see what it was like.

288

00:15:40,780 --> 00:15:42,910

That was a little bizarre.

289

00:15:42,910 --> 00:15:44,410

But they were all very nice.

290

00:15:44,410 --> 00:15:48,010

And some had been  
also in NATO command.

291

00:15:48,010 --> 00:15:51,370

We had given a big award  
to this German general,

292

00:15:51,370 --> 00:15:53,380

head of the medical thing.

293

00:15:53,380 --> 00:15:56,800

So after lunch he invited me  
to go into this auditorium

294

00:15:56,800 --> 00:15:59,770

where there were about  
100 medical students, boys

295

00:15:59,770 --> 00:16:01,990

and girls in their 20s, I guess.

296

00:16:01,990 --> 00:16:05,890

And he said did they  
almost all spoke English.

297

00:16:05,890 --> 00:16:10,230

Well, I don't know, I  
spoke in English obviously,

298

00:16:10,230 --> 00:16:14,860

and fairly slowly, and I told  
them all about my experience.

299

00:16:14,860 --> 00:16:17,260

And I got a standing  
ovation at the end.

300

00:16:17,260 --> 00:16:20,070

I don't know how much  
they got out of it,

301

00:16:20,070 --> 00:16:24,540

but it was fascinating  
to do that.

302

00:16:24,540 --> 00:16:28,560

On the way back from this  
last time at Lufthansa

303

00:16:28,560 --> 00:16:32,550

I sat next to a German  
general of all things,

304  
00:16:32,550 --> 00:16:36,120  
and he was very nice.

305  
00:16:36,120 --> 00:16:39,030  
After all, as you say  
to get used to the fact

306  
00:16:39,030 --> 00:16:43,170  
that they are allies,  
and I made a point

307  
00:16:43,170 --> 00:16:48,000  
in my speech everywhere,  
before and there,

308  
00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:51,150  
particularly that we were all--

309  
00:16:51,150 --> 00:16:52,650  
this would never happen again.

310  
00:16:52,650 --> 00:16:56,560  
And that-- where--  
these are somewhere.

311  
00:16:56,560 --> 00:17:06,480  
Anyhow, that we're all allies,  
and that we would all together

312  
00:17:06,480 --> 00:17:09,450  
believe in the slogan  
of never again.

313  
00:17:09,450 --> 00:17:15,690  
And I complimented him on the  
fact that all of these events

314  
00:17:15,690 --> 00:17:20,460  
they brought in all kinds of  
German high school and college

315

00:17:20,460 --> 00:17:21,540  
kids.

316  
00:17:21,540 --> 00:17:26,970  
And I'd say most of the crowd  
there in 2010 were German.

317  
00:17:26,970 --> 00:17:29,880  
Well, maybe half German  
and half survivors.

318  
00:17:29,880 --> 00:17:31,120  
It was hard to tell.

319  
00:17:31,120 --> 00:17:34,650  
There were a couple of  
thousand people there.

320  
00:17:34,650 --> 00:17:39,210  
But now they have a  
wonderful German ladies

321  
00:17:39,210 --> 00:17:43,430  
that run the Welcome Center,  
and they were the ones

322  
00:17:43,430 --> 00:17:47,810  
that I had dealt with beforehand  
and got on the program.

323  
00:17:47,810 --> 00:17:50,690  
And they were very worried--  
it was funny, ahead of time

324  
00:17:50,690 --> 00:17:56,360  
that the initial rivalry  
between the three divisions

325  
00:17:56,360 --> 00:18:00,380  
would make it odd  
if I represented

326  
00:18:00,380 --> 00:18:02,900

All-American troops,  
unless I got clearance

327  
00:18:02,900 --> 00:18:04,920  
from the other divisions.

328  
00:18:04,920 --> 00:18:06,140  
Well, I did.

329  
00:18:06,140 --> 00:18:07,820  
I knew the guys in each one.

330  
00:18:07,820 --> 00:18:11,900  
I called up and said look,  
I'm going to be back there,

331  
00:18:11,900 --> 00:18:14,720  
and I'm not just  
speaking for the 20th,

332  
00:18:14,720 --> 00:18:19,280  
I happen to be with all of  
us who were there in '45.

333  
00:18:19,280 --> 00:18:20,530  
Do you mind?

334  
00:18:20,530 --> 00:18:24,420  
Oh, no, no, that's  
fine, you represent us.

335  
00:18:24,420 --> 00:18:28,020  
I tracked them down, one  
from each division somewhere

336  
00:18:28,020 --> 00:18:28,800  
in this country.

337  
00:18:28,800 --> 00:18:31,630

338  
00:18:31,630 --> 00:18:33,880

But it's funny that  
the German organizers

339  
00:18:33,880 --> 00:18:36,970  
were afraid that somehow  
that this would come up,

340  
00:18:36,970 --> 00:18:38,610  
that if I spoke--

341  
00:18:38,610 --> 00:18:40,540  
anyway, we cleared all that.

342  
00:18:40,540 --> 00:18:43,750

343  
00:18:43,750 --> 00:18:48,240  
So I think enough time has  
gone by so that anybody that

344  
00:18:48,240 --> 00:18:50,930  
was there at all  
and still living,

345  
00:18:50,930 --> 00:18:52,805  
because an awful lot have died.

346  
00:18:52,805 --> 00:18:54,050  
Yeah.

347  
00:18:54,050 --> 00:18:56,480  
But I sort of got into  
this because at the end

348  
00:18:56,480 --> 00:19:01,670  
I became president of the  
retirees of the 20th Armored

349  
00:19:01,670 --> 00:19:02,180  
Division.

350  
00:19:02,180 --> 00:19:03,920

I did that for about five years.

351

00:19:03,920 --> 00:19:06,560

I organized several  
of our reunions.

352

00:19:06,560 --> 00:19:11,750

And the biggest one was at  
West Point just before this.

353

00:19:11,750 --> 00:19:17,120

It was actually the  
same year, 2010.

354

00:19:17,120 --> 00:19:19,377

And they had one more  
we didn't get to,

355

00:19:19,377 --> 00:19:20,960

and now they're going  
to-- they wanted

356

00:19:20,960 --> 00:19:23,760

to go back and have a final  
one at Camp Campbell, Kentucky.

357

00:19:23,760 --> 00:19:27,920

I'm not sure I want to go  
back there, particularly.

358

00:19:27,920 --> 00:19:32,660

When you have these reunions  
do you talk about Dachau?

359

00:19:32,660 --> 00:19:36,470

Yeah, and I gave a  
special talk that year

360

00:19:36,470 --> 00:19:39,950

about going back to Dachau,  
and what had happened.

361

00:19:39,950 --> 00:19:44,360

And there was a funny  
reaction to that.

362  
00:19:44,360 --> 00:19:46,430  
The people who  
hadn't seen Dachau

363  
00:19:46,430 --> 00:19:48,020  
didn't seem to care about it.

364  
00:19:48,020 --> 00:19:51,020  
I mean, it was weird, because  
that was only a very--

365  
00:19:51,020 --> 00:19:53,060  
You mean the people hadn't  
been there initially?

366  
00:19:53,060 --> 00:19:57,920  
In our division, there were  
really very few who had.

367  
00:19:57,920 --> 00:20:02,420  
And the others had lots of other  
war stories and about taking

368  
00:20:02,420 --> 00:20:04,322  
Munich and all that,  
but they didn't--

369  
00:20:04,322 --> 00:20:05,780  
They were not  
physically in Dachau?

370  
00:20:05,780 --> 00:20:09,050  
They had never seen it,  
and weren't particularly

371  
00:20:09,050 --> 00:20:10,920  
shocked by it until they had--

372  
00:20:10,920 --> 00:20:13,460

373  
00:20:13,460 --> 00:20:15,050  
so I didn't make a big point.

374  
00:20:15,050 --> 00:20:17,510  
But I told them  
what had happened.

375  
00:20:17,510 --> 00:20:22,200  
And that was kind  
of curious feeling.

376  
00:20:22,200 --> 00:20:27,630  
And I didn't like to  
criticize the other people.

377  
00:20:27,630 --> 00:20:31,110  
Maybe it's contrast, that I  
had such a fascinating career

378  
00:20:31,110 --> 00:20:32,160  
afterwards.

379  
00:20:32,160 --> 00:20:35,010  
To some of them this  
was the not the Dachau,

380  
00:20:35,010 --> 00:20:37,350  
but the fact of being  
in the 20th and in

381  
00:20:37,350 --> 00:20:41,338  
the war was probably the--

382  
00:20:41,338 --> 00:20:42,755  
I don't mean to  
sound disparaging,

383  
00:20:42,755 --> 00:20:44,760  
but the biggest  
thing in their lives.

384

00:20:44,760 --> 00:20:45,468  
Their high point?

385  
00:20:45,468 --> 00:20:47,010  
They went back to  
their small places

386  
00:20:47,010 --> 00:20:51,498  
and where they lived, and  
brought up, and that was fine.

387  
00:20:51,498 --> 00:20:53,040  
Now, that wasn't  
true of all of them.

388  
00:20:53,040 --> 00:20:56,700  
There was one guy in Tucson  
when we had our thing there

389  
00:20:56,700 --> 00:21:00,870  
that he had done a lot of  
speaking, and he just died.

390  
00:21:00,870 --> 00:21:02,140  
He was a very good man.

391  
00:21:02,140 --> 00:21:04,730  
And when we went and  
had our reunion there

392  
00:21:04,730 --> 00:21:09,600  
he rallied around and found  
all of these survivors

393  
00:21:09,600 --> 00:21:18,430  
and a number of Holocaust  
Jewish refugees and people.

394  
00:21:18,430 --> 00:21:20,160  
So that was very interesting.

395  
00:21:20,160 --> 00:21:22,080  
So it didn't apply to

everybody, but I would

396  
00:21:22,080 --> 00:21:25,580  
say to some that it was the--

397  
00:21:25,580 --> 00:21:28,460  
that Dachau was not, except  
for those of us who saw it,

398  
00:21:28,460 --> 00:21:30,320  
was not the main.

399  
00:21:30,320 --> 00:21:34,040  
When you meet survivors  
do you automatically

400  
00:21:34,040 --> 00:21:36,760  
tell them that you were  
in the army and you were--

401  
00:21:36,760 --> 00:21:38,962  
Well, yeah, I'm not  
pushing it at them,

402  
00:21:38,962 --> 00:21:40,880  
but if they ask and so on, yeah.

403  
00:21:40,880 --> 00:21:42,620  
You don't volunteer  
it in other words?

404  
00:21:42,620 --> 00:21:43,880  
Well, I do, I do.

405  
00:21:43,880 --> 00:21:46,670  
I mean, if I find that there  
are survivors from the war,

406  
00:21:46,670 --> 00:21:48,290  
yes, I do right away.

407  
00:21:48,290 --> 00:21:49,130

Yeah.

408  
00:21:49,130 --> 00:21:51,050  
You do?

409  
00:21:51,050 --> 00:21:55,490  
And they're always  
interested, I must say.

410  
00:21:55,490 --> 00:21:58,180  
Even if they come  
from another camp.

411  
00:21:58,180 --> 00:21:59,120  
Yeah.

412  
00:21:59,120 --> 00:22:02,362  
Buchenwald or something.

413  
00:22:02,362 --> 00:22:06,350  
Do you read a lot about  
that time and those places?

414  
00:22:06,350 --> 00:22:08,130  
Not as much as I should.

415  
00:22:08,130 --> 00:22:14,010  
I'm just getting Atkinson's  
new book on the war.

416  
00:22:14,010 --> 00:22:16,740  
I don't know, we don't do as  
much reading as we should.

417  
00:22:16,740 --> 00:22:18,670  
Or did you, did you  
read, I should say?

418  
00:22:18,670 --> 00:22:20,940  
Yeah, well off and  
on I have, sure.

419

00:22:20,940 --> 00:22:21,630  
Yeah.

420  
00:22:21,630 --> 00:22:23,080  
I don't know, I think that the--

421  
00:22:23,080 --> 00:22:26,340

422  
00:22:26,340 --> 00:22:28,350  
we don't read as  
much as we should.

423  
00:22:28,350 --> 00:22:31,260  
Too many newspapers  
and articles.

424  
00:22:31,260 --> 00:22:33,810  
When you-- I mean, you've  
been on the inside,

425  
00:22:33,810 --> 00:22:39,280  
but when there are articles  
and programs on other genocides

426  
00:22:39,280 --> 00:22:40,680  
in the world?

427  
00:22:40,680 --> 00:22:42,270  
Well, I've watched  
the-- because I've

428  
00:22:42,270 --> 00:22:43,560  
had too much time in Africa.

429  
00:22:43,560 --> 00:22:44,698  
I watched that very much--

430  
00:22:44,698 --> 00:22:45,740  
And especially in Africa?

431  
00:22:45,740 --> 00:22:50,250

Yeah, the Congolese thing is  
just a continual horrible mess

432  
00:22:50,250 --> 00:22:51,150  
down there.

433  
00:22:51,150 --> 00:22:52,780  
Rwanda is the same thing.

434  
00:22:52,780 --> 00:22:56,010  
Right, so again because  
you were visual?

435  
00:22:56,010 --> 00:22:59,140  
But that's more of my African  
connection than the Dachau one,

436  
00:22:59,140 --> 00:23:03,937  
accept that one genocide  
is just as bad as another.

437  
00:23:03,937 --> 00:23:04,770  
I was going to say--

438  
00:23:04,770 --> 00:23:05,526  
yeah.

439  
00:23:05,526 --> 00:23:06,026  
Yeah.

440  
00:23:06,026 --> 00:23:08,900

441  
00:23:08,900 --> 00:23:10,790  
Do you feel you have  
a deeper understanding

442  
00:23:10,790 --> 00:23:14,150  
because you saw it up close  
when you were 21 years old?

443  
00:23:14,150 --> 00:23:15,500

Yeah, I think so.

444

00:23:15,500 --> 00:23:18,470

445

00:23:18,470 --> 00:23:22,070

Although, it's funny because  
it was so far back and then

446

00:23:22,070 --> 00:23:25,953

I had all my Foreign Service  
career and this and that.

447

00:23:25,953 --> 00:23:27,620

And it was really  
toward the end of that

448

00:23:27,620 --> 00:23:30,620

when I've had time to go to  
these reunions and work on them

449

00:23:30,620 --> 00:23:34,520

and go back to Dachau  
that brought it

450

00:23:34,520 --> 00:23:37,670

back much more than  
the intervening years

451

00:23:37,670 --> 00:23:40,370

when we were  
traveling in Africa.

452

00:23:40,370 --> 00:23:42,055

The kids were so  
young and all that.

453

00:23:42,055 --> 00:23:42,597

Right, right.

454

00:23:42,597 --> 00:23:45,530

455

00:23:45,530 --> 00:23:46,230

Well, thank you.

456

00:23:46,230 --> 00:23:47,190

I've enjoyed this.

457

00:23:47,190 --> 00:23:49,310

I guess that covers  
things pretty well.

458

00:23:49,310 --> 00:23:49,970

Well, I going to said,  
unless is there anything else

459

00:23:49,970 --> 00:23:51,530

you want to add before we?

460

00:23:51,530 --> 00:23:52,890

Well, I just want to thank you.

461

00:23:52,890 --> 00:23:55,760

I think it's wonderful  
that you're doing this, you

462

00:23:55,760 --> 00:23:57,510

and other volunteers.

463

00:23:57,510 --> 00:24:00,740

And I did tell the  
different people

464

00:24:00,740 --> 00:24:04,470

at the museum at one point  
that I'm open to make speeches.

465

00:24:04,470 --> 00:24:07,700

Nobody's asked me at this point,  
but if anybody wants to I'm

466

00:24:07,700 --> 00:24:09,050

still available to.

467

00:24:09,050 --> 00:24:12,140

Wonderful.

468

00:24:12,140 --> 00:24:14,330

You asked one funny question about the Germans.

469

00:24:14,330 --> 00:24:17,900

Well, it's interesting because the German embassy here I came

470

00:24:17,900 --> 00:24:21,110

back at one point, they had one of their young attachés that

471

00:24:21,110 --> 00:24:23,690

was supposed to sort of take care of this kind of a thing

472

00:24:23,690 --> 00:24:25,980

and follow up on.

473

00:24:25,980 --> 00:24:28,500

It was a little odd, but I went over and spoke there once

474

00:24:28,500 --> 00:24:30,890

at the German embassy to the young officers

475

00:24:30,890 --> 00:24:31,910

about what had happened.

476

00:24:31,910 --> 00:24:35,740

That was a couple of years ago.

477

00:24:35,740 --> 00:24:36,740

What was their reaction?

478

00:24:36,740 --> 00:24:38,782

Do you remember some of the questions they asked?

479  
00:24:38,782 --> 00:24:42,920  
Well, the were interested,  
they asked questions.

480  
00:24:42,920 --> 00:24:46,020  
I was a little bit  
cynical or skeptical.

481  
00:24:46,020 --> 00:24:48,770  
I think that they  
were trying to be

482  
00:24:48,770 --> 00:24:51,950  
on the right side of  
everything by bringing it up.

483  
00:24:51,950 --> 00:24:55,310  
And I was happy to do it,  
but I felt a little kind

484  
00:24:55,310 --> 00:24:58,630  
of a unusual event.

485  
00:24:58,630 --> 00:24:59,810  
Well, thank you very much.

486  
00:24:59,810 --> 00:25:00,310  
Gail.

487  
00:25:00,310 --> 00:25:03,040  
Well, thank you, thank you.

488  
00:25:03,040 --> 00:25:05,850  
OK.

489  
00:25:05,850 --> 00:25:09,570  
This concludes United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

490  
00:25:09,570 --> 00:25:13,340  
volunteer collection

interview with Alan Lukens.

491

00:25:13,340 --> 00:25:15,000