

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Julian Reuter**  
**December 1, 2016**  
**RG-50.106\*0259**

## PREFACE

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## **JULIAN REUTER**

### **December 1, 2016**

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Julian Reuter. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on December 1, 2016 and is taking place at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Julian Reuter: Julian Reuter.

Q: And is that the name you were born with?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. And where were you born and when were you born?

A: I was born in Berlin, Germany in 1926. December 21<sup>st</sup> 1926.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your family. Your parents' names?

A: My mother's name was **Tsili**, which is, that's German I guess and my father was Joseph.

Q: Were they from Berlin also?

A: No, my father was from **Hollenbach** [ph], not Hollenbach. Hollen. I'm trying to think, trying to remember.

Q: That's ok, we can come back to it.

A: My mother comes from, that's where my mother comes from what was it, **Korna Nabrach, Heise Bomberg** [ph].

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Q: In?

A: It's Germany. Yeah. And my father was from Hollen, that is the town.

Q: What brought them to Berlin?

A: I really couldn't tell you. How would I know?

Q: Did you have any brothers or sister?

A: I had a brother and a sister.

Q: And their names?

A: Wolfgang.

Q: And your sister's name?

A: Ursula.

Q: Were they older or younger than you?

A: Older.

Q: So you were the youngest?

A: Yep.

Q: Let's talk again a little bit about your childhood. Was your family very religious?

A: My -- I come from a religious home.

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Q: So you remember celebrating holidays?

A: Oh yeah, I went to, when I went to school in Berlin, my teacher, my music teacher, he was the choir director in the oldest synagogue in Berlin, **Heidereutergasse**. It was the oldest synagogue, burned down like, all in there. And I used to sing in the choir Friday nights or Saturday as I got a little bit older. So but we did celebrate holidays and Passover and everything.

Q: Did you have a favorite holiday as a child?

A: Did I have what?

Q: A favorite holiday as a child?

A: Yeah, Hanukkah, got a present every night.

Q: And you were in the choir? Is there any song that you remember that you used to sing?

A: Oh yeah. You know certain things have -- I think sometimes as you're older, the older the longer things you remember. And where did I put my glasses ok?

Q: What's one of your favorite songs from childhood?

A: From childhood?

Q: Any that you can remember?

A: Not that I remember anything.

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Q: You went to a Jewish school? Jewish day school?

A: I went first to a regular school and then –

Q: German public school?

A: Public school and then we were not permitted to go anymore. Then we went to a Jewish school. And I was in, I went to school on Kaiser **schlosse** and it was, it was that's the way it was. They didn't permit any more in public schools so that –

Q: We'll get to that.

A: And the English teacher that I had at the time, they couldn't even teach English any more in school so he took a couple of the kids that were good in English and we had, once a week, in his house, he would invite a few of the kids, a couple of the times so it doesn't show and we would learn you know more English. But as far as songs or something, I don't remember.

Q: Did you live in a house or an apartment?

A: Apartment.

Q: Was it in a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews?

A: We were, I was on a little neighborhood of East Berlin and then we went out, my family for some reason, my brother or something, they went out west, the last that I remember in Berlin.

Q: You moved to another apartment in West Berlin.

A: Yeah, yeah and I don't know how that happened and which way. My brother couldn't do the things that he -- was good for a musician and so like that so he became a, they must have a name. He took care of displays in windows. Shop windows.

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Q: A window designer?

A: Window designer, is that what they call it?

Q: I guess. What kind of work did your father do?

A: My father was a furrier.

Q: A furrier? Did he have his own shop?

A: He has his own from what I heard, but he passed away by an accident very early, a motorcycle accident so that's how we were, just average then, just middle. My mother. We were three kids, right, so one. He earned money I presume and my sister worked at a kindergarten. That's taking care of maybe like they have the schools, after school programs or stuff like that. She was being taught by somebody and naturally I was at school early. That's it.

Q: Do you remember when you were very young any anti-Semitic incidents in school or in the neighborhood, when you were young?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you have any, later on I know obviously there were, but in your earlier childhood, do you remember any anti-Semitic incident? Other kids taunting you.

A: No.

Q: No problem.

A: No, I have no memory of it, no.

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Q: Did you like sports, were you athletic?

A: Sports was soccer, naturally. Sure. And I used to ruin every month a pair of shoes that we weren't supposed to play soccer in so.

Q: What kind of a team? Was it mixed Jewish and non-Jewish boys or was it – who was on the team. Was it a Jewish team?

A: Jewish yeah.

Q: Only Jewish.

A: Yeah. Only Jewish kids.

Q: You said you went to this school and how far along in the school did you get? What grade did –

A: I think maybe what would be equal here probably maybe they were taught was public school only here what they would call -- maybe fifth or sixth grade. I don't know. Something like that. But the teachings in Germany I think was much stronger than here. Much better. Much better. But that's as far. I was, I went to school a little after, after the blitz were. That was it. After that.

Q: We'll get to that. That's 1939 so we'll get, before that. Did you have any extended family, relatives, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins?

A: Grandparents I had which I remember. Not too much.

Q: On both sides? Mother and father's side?

A: No only on my mother's side I believe. Only on my mother's side. I don't remember about my father. And lots of aunts and uncles.



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Q: So did you get together on holidays?

A: All holidays and Saturdays, oh yeah. Used to walk, oh yeah.

Q: What about non-Jewish friends? Did you have any non-Jewish friends?

A: Not that I remember. No, not that it was, that I didn't want to, mind you but I didn't have any contact with them. So how – you were going to a Jewish school so where, so –

Q: But you said your neighborhood was a mixed neighborhood.

A: Mixed yeah.

Q: So you came in touch with non-Jewish children in the neighborhood.

A: No, not really because it did not, how would you say. There was no reason to really. And I mean and then at that point already maybe they would say there's a Jew and so –

Q: How would you describe yourself as a youngster? Were you an independent child or were you very dependent on your mother? Or on your brother and sister? How would you describe yourself?

A: No I was pretty independent.

Q: You went off and did things by yourself when you were a youngster?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Then obviously conditions started to change and you were what, seven years old when Hitler came into power in 33. What would be your first recollections of Adolf Hitler?

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A: The first recollection was when Hindenburg retired. The bells were playing and they said that he became the vice counselor.

Q: The chancellor. What language did you speak at home?

A: German.

Q: German. Did you speak Yiddish?

A: Some Yiddish, yeah.

Q: With your grandparents? Did they speak Yiddish or German?

A: Yeah also some, yes. Well the grandparents I guess came from Poland, Warsaw then. Well the area where my mother comes from Korna Nabrach Heise Bomberg is one of those areas that was very interchangeable being back and forth. So I don't –

Q: Do you remember seeing your first German soldier?

A: Oh sure.

Q: What, as a young boy, what were your thoughts? What were your feelings when you saw a German soldier? Frightening or impressed or –

A: Not really, nothing at all really to speak. You know what, what the primary thing was that most German Jews at the beginning and even at a later point, everybody thought oh I'm a World War One veteran. We're not going to be touched. Something that I maybe if he would listen, something that I think is the same thing here in America. And what the Jews forget is this is a Christian country first. Now it's all mixed naturally. But it's still primarily – you go out west, never mind. You go out on the from Miami or you want to go out to west coast. I'm trying to

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remember. I drove on the highway how many times. Don't go out there if you got a Jewish face or nose and try to buy a tank of gas. So and we're making the same mistake. I don't know if he's listening. We're making the, making the same identical mistakes here. What is my belief just to give you an idea. When you had all those protests with the Vietnamese war and all the protests on the campus and everything. they got the first student up in the front was a Jew that was killed. We're a complete, I would be on the complete opposite end. And tell it to Jewish people here, no, no. You can't talk about the , oh I'm American.

Q: We can talk more about that later. What was the first change that you noticed after Hitler came into power. You obviously speaking German you heard him making his speeches. Did you listen? I know you were very young.

A: I didn't listen to the speeches.

Q: You did not listen. Did you ever see him?

A: Oh sure, come home from school, walking and they used to parade through the streets and he used to come with a, with an open limousine and everybody had to salute and I had the books.

Q: What did you do?

A: I put my, the books under my –

Q: Your school books?

A: Yeah and this way they couldn't, nobody could –

Q: And you held them in front of you so you didn't have to raise your arm?

A: So but no. You see him and so on and –

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Q: Was it terribly frightening or did you just take it in stride? To see him? What did he mean to you? Again you were young.

A: Not, not anything to speak of, no.

Q: Soldiers marching, for a young boy, is that a frightening experience?

A: Not really. You heard frightening you heard, when you heard, we came out of school, of the Jewish school and you would have the yellow shirts there waiting for us and fight and all this.

Q: Other boys would fight with you.

A: The yellow shirts, the Nazi kids right so there used to be fights. That you –

Q: Did you fight back?

A: Oh we always did.

Q: You were strong enough to do that?

A: Yeah, yeah. But those were the, that's things that I can remember I noticed. Right. What happened either in adulthood or some, with adults, not at that point not yet.

Q: Did you talk this over with your mother? That somebody hit you and beat you and attacked you Is that the kind of thing you would talk to your mother about?

A: No, the only thing we talked about that you got to be careful. Don't go this store, here or there, but other than that, the German Jews didn't think that it was going to be a disaster like it turned out to be.

Q: Did you confide in your older brother or sister about what was happening to you?

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A: I did to a certain degree sure. And about, nothing that anybody could do. It was part of, it became part of life.

Q: When you saw a swastika, what did that mean to you as a ten, 11, 12 year old.

A: Didn't mean anything to me. At the time when I was younger you know really.

Q: Life went on, you continued in school and then what was the next change in your life?

A: When they came out with the, with a star. A yellow star that you had to sew on, be sewn on and --

Q: How did that make your family and you feel? Was it embarrassing?

A: Well you knew you were a marked person.

Q: Yeah.

A: But.

Q: Did you have your own star, as a child?

A: Yeah, oh sure. Sure everyone had. And it was supposed to be up here and some people brought it down further but you had a double breasted jacket and cover it up to go around. You know people always find a way and that was one of the ways. But til we really got to the point of fighting daily and the arrests and so on. Then you really even if I was young. I was, by then, already ten, 11 years old. You're starting to realize something is not right. And then you had November 9. So that sure made you aware.

Q: Kristallnacht. You're talking about Kristallnacht.

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A: Yeah.

Q: What about the other restrictions in public for the Jews?

A: Well you had restrictions in certain places you couldn't go as a Jew. And you had –

Q: So my question is well how does a ten or 11 year old boy react to something like that?

Do you just –

A: Nothing.

Q: You just go along with it and – were you particularly frightened to go out on the street. Was that, or did you just do it as a –

A: You wouldn't go in a mound of people or something, no. you wouldn't want to do that through a, no.

Q: A crowd.

A: You don't want to make any big showing of anything so you walked by yourself always. Maybe one person but just to –

Q: Was your mother, what was your mother's state of mind? She was a young widow with three children? What was her state of mind when things got more difficult?

A: How would I know as a child? I wouldn't know.

Q: And then comes November of 38. So you're almost 12, it's a month before you're 12 I guess. What are your memories of Kristallnacht?

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A: Only what I've, I wasn't out but when you went down on the street the next days and you saw all the Jewish stores and the synagogues and all this, that's, that's how it became really noticeable that what I remember. And it's, there's no way of describing anybody's feeling. How could you, how would I remember from then to now even, even what the feelings were. Nothing. Certainly not pleasant of anything.

Q: Was it the kind of thing you would talk over with your friends, your friends who were your age? Would you all talk about it? All these terrible –

A: Not really. The only time we talked about maybe when you came out of school and you knew the yellow shirts were going to meet you so you got ready for that, but that's it. There's nothing else really.

Q: Did you continue in school? When did schooling change for you?

A: Well my family, my brother and myself, we tried to go across, get out of Germany with false papers, but it didn't work.

Q: When was this? After Kristallnacht?

A: Yeah. And it didn't work.

Q: Was this early 39? 1939?

A: Let's see. 39, 40, somewhere along there. And we tried and we had papers that you bought, false papers and so on. But it didn't work.

Q: But you were young. You were –

A: Yeah, well we were going, we were trying to go over the border to Holland.

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Q: How much older was your brother than you?

A: My brother is five years older, I think.

Q: Oh, so he was 18, like 18 years old.

A: Well, I was born in 26. I think he was born in 20, 19 or 20 so we tried but it didn't work. Was arrested.

Q: How did you feel leaving Germany, leaving your mother and going to Holland?

A: Well we hoped that you would get there and –

Q: Get there and bring her.

A: Yeah and try it but you didn't think of so much who you're leaving, just to go on and hope that somehow it would work that you could get them after but none of that worked. None of that worked. So I was a kid and I was arrested for trying to go and things like that. My brother was also arrested but he went somewhere else. And --

Q: So you were alone?

A: Yeah.

Q: In Holland.

A: No, no. I never got, we got to the border, that's how far. And they found out everything about it.

Q: So you never got into Holland.



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A: And I was in -- arrested and I stayed in Gestapo headquarters for five, six months and then I started my tour out of there to camps.

Q: Let's talk about this five or six months. Where were you and what was, what were the conditions?

A: What? The camps.

Q: No, the five or six months after you were arrested. Where were you?

A: Constant, in Berlin, in the Gestapo headquarters.

Q: You were in, ok like a prison, a prison cell?

A: Yeah oh yeah. In the cellar. Nothing, it was --

Q: Were there other children your age?

A: There was other people but not, I don't know about children, no. Not that I remember.

Q: You were 13, 14 something like that.

A: We weren't out. We were it's in the darkness. We were darkness, cellar and what have you so nothing. No food and constant, they take you out and constant questioning and questioning and over and over again.

Q: Did they physically abuse you?

A: No, not there. Not necessarily. No.

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Q: It was just questioning? Just questioning? What did you say? What were your answers? How much did you know?

A: Nothing. Really nothing. What could you tell anyone?

Q: How did your brother get those, I guess false papers?

A: I have no idea, I have no idea. There was places that I guess people had them.

Q: Did you have a bar mitzvah?

A: I had a bar mitzvah. Very, very short and sweet.

Q: Where and when?

A: In Berlin. It was right after that we went out.

Q: What was your bar mitzvah like? What did you do?

A: I think I was just up, called up and I think that's it. That's all I remember. That's it.

Q: You were what, you said six months in the Gestapo.

A: About five or six months.

Q: Five or six months. Did you have any contact with your mother? Was she able to visit you?

A: No. Absolutely not. Nobody. I never saw my mother after that, no more.

Q: Were with –

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A: The only thing I have is, I have at home. The **jüdische Gemeinde** in Berlin. They sent me papers, aunts and uncles and what, and all it said is on transport so and so two were on 1943 or 43 and passed away in such and such camp maybe or something. Not a name or a date or anything. That's it.

Q: You were there for six months. You were not in contact with any family members.

A: No, absolutely not, nothing.

Q: What did you do all day? What does a 14 year old –

A: Nothing. There was questioning and nothing. In jail. You're in the can. You're not going –

Q: Were you able to go outside and get fresh air?

A: No. What world are you living in? They don't let, they don't let here prisoners go out in the fresh air. Right?

Q: To march around inside. Ok and food, they brought you enough, obviously enough food.

A: Nothing. Food, water, bread and water and some cold soup. Nothing.

Q: Why did they release you? Then they released you. They let you go.

A: Yeah, they let me go to a camp. Sure.

Q: What did they –

A: We were, I started my tour. It was what 40, 41. I started my tour of camps.

Q: This is 1941 ok. And so where did you, so you never went back home to your place?

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A: No. First one I was in, just for transfer I guess, to Buchenwald and I was there, I don't remember. Not long. And transferred to another camp.

Q: Did you know, what did you know about Buchenwald as a young teenager? What did you know about what it was? Did you know what Buchenwald was? When you were that young age?

A: Did you know what?

Q: What it represented? What it was? What Buchenwald was?

A: Well naturally you know you, I was able to read. It said concentration camp so I mean I learned how to read and you automatically know like you saw all the prisoners with the striped suits and –

Q: I mean did you know what it was before you went there, before you went there did you know what Buchenwald was?

A: No.

Q: So you learned when you got there.

A: Right.

Q: You learned when you got there.

A: And I was transferred to a couple of other camps, back and forth. And I finally wound up, my final home then was Auschwitz.

Q: Well let's go through those steps now. So you go to Buchenwald. How long were you there the first time?

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A: I don't remember exactly. Maybe three weeks, four weeks, a month.

Q: And what did you do there during that time?

A: Nothing. At that time because we were moving. Everybody else was working hard labor, hitting rocks and all kinds of stuff like that. And but they didn't bother with the younger people too much.

Q: Were you with a group of young boys, young teenage boys?

A: Young and old. We got thrown together with everything. Yeah, yeah.

Q: Were you just wearing your regular clothes or were you –

A: No. You had regular striped suits.

Q: At that time you were wearing –

A: Sure.

Q: Ok and so you were there for a short time and –

A: And then I, it was all in transfers til they got finally how they figured out where I was going to go or whether different people that were with us right. You never knew exactly who but you could recognize them after a while.

Q: Did you recognize any of your childhood friends? Were any of them with you, school friends?

A: No, no, no. No.

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Q: Neighbors?

A: Nothing.

Q: You were on your own? You had no ties to any of the people, any of the other prisoners?

A: No, younger people and what have you. That's it.

Q: Ok. How was your health at that point? Was it ok? You were still, your health?

A: Oh with my health.

Q: You were ok.

A: Well I'll ask you. How would you know I was a 12 or 13 year old person, 14 year old. How would you, what do you know about your health really? I don't think much. Maybe if you had a cold, but even that, would you recognize or something? No.

Q: What did they give you to eat in Buchenwald? The first time.

A: Water soup and a small piece of bread and they had some kind of maybe coffee what they called. Nothing, pot wash.

Q: And the sleeping conditions?

A: On straw sacks. Bunks and straw sacks. Yeah. Nothing.

Q: Did you think about your family a lot? Or try not to think of them?

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A: No. Not really. What you're most interested in is, even as a younger person, is to live or go to the next day. That's you – the people, especially when I came finally to Auschwitz, people that did think about their family and so on, men that had children and maybe they couldn't help it right. But if they couldn't take it you'd find them the next morning up on the electric wires, burned up. That's it, so.

Q: And then from Buchenwald, where did you go? After your first trip to Buchenwald, where did you go?

A: I think I went to Dachau.

Q: How did you get there? By train?

A: They transported, yeah.

Q: On the train?

A: I don't know what it was, on train or trucks. I don't, I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember. Ok so now you're you said Dachau and how long were you there?

A: Not long. This was all different camps just for transfer and then finally –

Q: Then from Dachau where –

A: I went to **Nordraden** (Nordhausen?) and I think one more, **Sachsenhausen**.

Q: Oh Sachsenhausen, but you stayed just a few weeks in each place, is that what you're saying?

A: Yeah that's all, all transfer time. And then finally I think was maybe by the end of 42, they started, Auschwitz was started and –

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Q: Had you heard of a place called Auschwitz at that time?

A: No.

Q: You had not.

A: Nothing. Nothing at all.

Q: Tell me about your passage going to Auschwitz. You got there on a train.

A: I think we went by train but I'm not sure. I don't remember.

Q: Were you with the same group of people as you moved to the different camps?

A: No, no, not necessarily.

Q: It was always different people? Other young people your age, 15, 16, 17, your age.

A: No, it was mixed. Whatever people, how they picked them to move them or what. No, couldn't tell you.

Q: Let's talk now about Auschwitz and arriving there.

A: Well, when we arrived --

Q: What was the condition when you got there?

A: I think when we came out from the cattle cars, there was dogs and just guards running around just like they show you. And this, one guy was there with a thing, Mengele.



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Q: How did you know it was Mengele?

A: I didn't know. Now, today I know. Then I didn't know. I had no idea what it meant even, what he did or what he didn't do. So that's how you find out. And I was in Auschwitz itself for a little while. And then we were transferred, I was transferred to **Birkenau**. And I was there and three years or more.

Q: Let's break it down a little more. So you get there and you said you're told to go, you get off the cattle car. People, were there dead people in the cattle car with you or everybody was still alive?

A: I think most people I think at that time they were still, still alive.

Q: So then they motioned to you where to go and what did you, where did you go? Where did they put you in Auschwitz?

A: In Auschwitz they, we put it, we were put into barracks. Take away the uniforms we had already but that wasn't the right uniform, they made you take it off and gave you the uniforms from there. And they dipped you down in the, infection thing. The whole body, pushed you all down.

Q: For lice you mean? To get rid of lice?

A: Yeah. And then you went to a barracks where they ran you. Until they finally then decided what, what to do with you.

Q: Did they give you a number? Did you get a number?

A: I got, sure I got a number.

Q: What is your number?

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A: 107279.

Q: 107279.

A: It's still there.

Q: It's still there. What were your thoughts when that was happening to you as a young adult, young boy?

A: No thoughts. Just keep going through the line, whatever.

Q: Was it painful to get the numbers?

A: I don't remember. I don't think so. Not that I remember but –

Q: Then you hear you're going to Birkenau.

A: Yeah. I did for a while, I believe I worked there in, in the death **Kommando** or whatever they called it.

Q: The **Sonder** Kommando?

A: We took the people out from the gas chamber and brought them up and they stacked them up in front of the crematorium. The fire couldn't burn as quick as they were, they were beaten so.

Q: So what was a day like for you? You moved, you went to Birkenau. They told you, they assigned you to be in the Sonder Kommando.

A: You got up there. They ran you out 5:00 in the morning maybe.

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Q: And counted for the **Appel**, for counting?

A: Counting, the Appel and you had to be counted in the barracks and then you went on the field and they counted again and so on and then you went to your different groups where you, where what was your labor to be.

Q: Did you do anything before working in the crematorium? Did you have a previous job, previous labor?

A: Where?

Q: In Birkenau. Or was going to the crematorium your first job?

A: No. The first job and finally I, in Birkenau we went to IG Farben. Slave labor.

Q: I just want to talk a little bit more before that. It's I know I'm sure very difficult to talk about but your thought processes when you were doing this work if you want to call it work of handling these bodies, what were some of your thoughts or did you not have any?

A: Not that I remember, didn't have any thoughts. The only thought is that you have was I think was always just to keep on going and live, try to live.

Q: Did the older prisoners, the older men try to be of help to you while you were doing this, the other men who had to do what you were doing?

A: Not, not very long. You know what. If somebody found a piece of bread laying on the ground, old and young were running after it. Everybody was taking care of their own life. Amen, so.

Q: Self-preservation.

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A: If you're brought this here to America, oh everybody's so nice. Let there come a shortage of something, or let there come a bomb flying at you. It's be like whew, all right.

Q: You said, I was going through a typical day with you. So you went out, you were counted and then what happened. You woke up. You were counted twice and then what?

A: Then you go to work. You went to your -- you marched in a group of a number of group and you were going in with a **kapo** and taking you to wherever.

Q: Which crematorium, what number, do you know the number of the crematorium you worked in?

A: Do I know the what?

Q: The number, was it --

A: No.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't think we had for that part, I don't think we had a number. I don't remember that.

Q: Just exactly what did you do? You took the, did you take the bodies out from the gas chamber? Where were you in that process? What were you specifically --

A: You take the body out.

Q: You went into the gas chambers?

A: Yeah. To take them out of the gas chamber and bring them out. The outdoor place.

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Q: And where did you put them?

A: In front of the crematorium.

Q: In front of the crematorium.

A: Yeah.

Q: Physically. Was it a demanding job to do that?

A: Physically in what.

Q: Just picking people –

A: Oh it's, you didn't come to ask me then. You ask me 90 years later or 80 years later. I'm sure it was hard. I'm sure. I mean you're not picking up you know like this.

Q: Did other prisoners, did other Sonder Kommandos help you? Seeing how young. I mean you were young. You were very young to be doing this.

A: It was young and old, everybody mixed. By then I was already 14, 15 so you know it's young but you become a man very quickly when you've got to live that way. So.

Q: Did you ever cry when you were in Auschwitz, in Birkenau?

A: Not that I remember no. I could be wrong but I don't remember it.

Q: Talking it over with the other prisoners, you were just too tired and too exhausted to even talk about.

A: No.

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Q: So then you would take the bodies to the crematorium and then go back to the gas chamber to get –

A: You maybe take more, right.

Q: And you just kept doing this all day long?

A: Yeah.

Q: For how many, for how long were you doing this for?

A: Maybe a couple of months.

Q: A couple of months. Were you concerned because I understand that the Sonder Kommandos didn't live too long, either, that they were –

A: I lost part of that.

Q: Did you ever worry that your life would be taken away from you for being a Sonder Kommando. Like many of the others were. You weren't worried about that?

A: You never had no thought about that.

Q: You didn't. Ok.

A: The only thought I think that I, that stuck with me all the time and that's try to live. Try to get past it and nothing. You never, it wouldn't, once you got into, once I got into the camp, and you had then you made some friends. Not friends but people that you knew. So then there was talk about this and talk about that. When you have time free, which wasn't much so then you had as young kids, you had, you take the kapos, right. Or take the block elders right, they were after

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kids, young boys to have sex. Well those are the things that then some of the kids, young kids, some of the things that you talk about.

Q: Did anybody approach you?

A: Oh yeah. A couple of times.

Q: How did you handle that?

A: (pause) I don't really remember but I think with one person, a couple of times I had to play around with him. I wouldn't let him do anything past that so that satisfied. There was even one of them was a Jewish guy that had one of the – when Birkenau became so big, so many people there wasn't enough barracks so they put on part of the field where they used to be counted, they put two big tents. And I'm trying to think of his name. They called him **Takala**. He came from Buchenwald. A Jewish fellow, who was locked up for, because he was a queer. And but he would take care of the kids, if you played around with him a little bit, you could get a, he had a way of getting food or a piece of bread. All right. As a matter of fact there was something in the paper, maybe you would know where somebody said something. They had an orchestra in Birkenau by prisoners. Beautiful tailored prison suits they had, beautiful tailored prison suits. And they used to play march music when we marched out and when we came back in. And that same group played dance music for the SS, for their girls and so on. And somebody made a remark. This is just recently. And like they were giving away something in order to live. My foot. Whoever said that, he should be shot. Anybody will do anything if you're going to, want to live. And anybody denies that or says it's not so, either are cockaroo and excuse me. You know I come from a much different area. Me, I talk to them a little bit, but it's, when you hear people like this talk, nobody should talk. The only experience that you have if you took, if you had the experience unfortunately then you have feelings. You know what it is. If it is somebody outside of that, no I can't. So. End of story.

Q: Was there or were you aware of any talk of resistance among the prisoners?

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A: Any talk of what?

Q: Resistance, resisting the –

A: No.

Q: You didn't hear of any of that?

A: No.

Q: Plans to do that?

A: It's, it is so tight in what they do, all day long and nights. Spotlights going around right and god forbid if there was somebody try to escape. There were sirens and you are out all night long and they are counting, and they are counting. They left us standing in Auschwitz and Birkenau in the cold and people would freeze standing up and then a guy comes with a rifle butt, knocked them over. So there was no, they had the mind so weak of a person I think that nobody would come up to think that there was no way that you could -- you had some of that in some of the ghettos. My brother died in Warsaw with his wife in the ghetto, in the uprising. There would be places, there was places where they had underground and where they had trying to fight back or something but they were able to do it there. It wasn't anything like the camps. They had a much different --

Q: Tighter control.

A: And they had a lot of it was also there was many of the servants in, in ghettos, same like they had the kapos and so on. The kapos that we had, they were all -- we let out everybody out of jails that were in, in life sentences. Queers, murderers, you name it, whatever they had. Those are the ones that became kapos and block houses. They were worse in some cases than the SS. All right. But how would you stand up there. There was no way in camp that you could do that



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because if they caught you, I was caught in IG Farben. We were on, whatever. And somewhere I wrote my address down where I lived. I came –

Q: Where you lived in Berlin you mean?

A: Where I lived in Berlin. When I came in at night wherever it was, then they pulled me out for trying to escape. And I got 25 lashes on the thing. So they had your mind so down that you would never come up with an idea to escape, I don't think. We never had it. Not any camps that I know.

Q: Did you find that you just became numb when you would walk by and see a lot of bodies?

A: I didn't get all of that.

Q: I mean obviously there were many dead bodies that you saw as a young, as a teenager.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you just after a while become numb, did you just walk right by these bodies and not –

A: Well it's -- the only other way was that you're on the wire burning.

Q: And you saw people on the wires?

A: Oh yeah, every day. Every morning you came out.

Q: What goes through a young boy, young man's mind when he sees that?

A: My mind, I think the more I saw of it, the more power it gave me. I got to get through without going there. So.

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Q: So you kept trying to hold on, to keep going.

A: I never tried to report. There was a prison hospital and \_\_\_\_\_ had one of the finest professors, prison professor that was in charge of it but he had nothing to work with. He had no medications or anything, but whatever, but if you went there, 99 percent it would be, you would be a guinea pig, right. I went there. I was I think maybe 15, or 15 and a half and I had an appendix right. They took out the appendix and I saw him take it out, no have medication or nothing. They pulled it out and three days later I was back to work. So, you want to live you didn't look at that. I never looked at that.

Q: Were you at all, or the prisoners aware of what was happening in the rest of Europe and what was happening to the other Jews? Did you know about that or did you just –

A: Not til the very later part.

Q: The later part, ok. But while you were in –

A: At the later part, then you came to realize because you had planes flying around and they were counting prisoners. And things like that. So at night bombs would fall.

Q: That's later, ok. So then while you're –

A: Then you became aware of it.

Q: You said you were in Birkenau for a few months. Is that what you – how long were you in Birkenau? Doing that work?

A: Probably from late 42, end of 42 and then 43, 44, 45.

Q: Were you doing the same thing all that time?

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A: No, no, no, no.

Q: How long were you a Sonder Kommando? For how long?

A: IG Farben, all of it was IG Farben. IG Farben I worked. One time I worked on a, I don't remember what they called it, I don't remember. But you were carrying steel rods, long steel rods that they used for buildings right. And they are maybe 20 feet and 25 feet long and they would put one prisoner, a handful of them, take one prisoner in the front and one in the back and the swing as you're walking, my shoulder was all old and full of pus and what have you right. My feet was all, my heels were all swollen from, because we had wooden soles and the material on the back of the shoe up and down was all open.

Q: You did this after you did the crematorium and the gas chamber?

A: Yeah, yeah oh yeah.

Q: Your first job was at –

A: That was carrying steel and then I worked in the cement group. We unloaded the cattle cars with cement. We had to carry, they would have the railroad track here and the warehouse up and we had like maybe a walk of maybe 2000 feet and you had to carry two, two hundred pounds and run. And if you didn't make it, the guy came, moved out like this so that was another group. Then I had another group. I worked, we were -- it was something to do with all electrical and stuff but we didn't do any electric drill. But the supplies to all the different things and carried big bags of paraphernalia to build.

Q: Where were you sleeping at night when you were doing all these different –

A: That's all in IG Farben. IG Farben industries and that's what you, he talked about. IG Farben, There's one guy that got involved and he won the case, whatever. And I was called to New York one evening. I don't know what it was, in the 60s, 70s. And there was a bunch of prisoners and

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they asked you questions about certain things that happened. If you knew the answer, they knew you were there. So I don't know, they gave a couple hundred dollars. Nothing to talk about really but –

Q: You did a few months of each of these jobs, of each of these – carrying the cement and all these difficult things.

A: You did everything. Whatever it is. At least I did.

Q: How were you told that your job had changed? How did they tell you? How did you know to stop one job and go to another one? They just –

A: How did I know what?

Q: How were you told to stop doing one job and then start a new one?

A: Oh they moved and nobody told you. They moved you. They put you in a different group. And that's it. They didn't ask you or tell you. That's –

Q: You had a morning, some food in the morning and then did you have food in the middle of the day?

A: Yeah in the middle of the day, but all water soup, nothing. Nothing to, no food, there was no food for –

Q: And then at night did they give you anything substantial?

A: A cold soup of some kind, something. If we had a piece of bread, a small piece of bread. We had one bite for a week from a piece.

Q: How did you keep yourself clean? Were you able to?

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A: You had no soap. You had nothing. Cold water we had -- the bathrooms were separate barracks and the cold and you had no clothes. You had to go, if you had to go to the john was just holes and there was nothing. There was no --

Q: You continued there and then the next, you said with IG Farben and then what?

A: After IG Farben then in 1945, January, they started evacuating Auschwitz. Because the Russians were coming from the east. And three weeks after I left, right, Auschwitz was liberated.

Q: You left. Tell me about your leaving?

A: Well they put us on cattle cars.

Q: And told you what? Did they tell you where you were going?

A: No. We just went on cattle cars. We were on the cattle cars there for a month or more.

Q: You were in the same car for a month?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you get out? Did you --

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: You weren't allowed off, out of the car?

A: No nothing, nothing. They didn't let you out or nothing.

Q: Did people die in --

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A: You made and people died and there was nothing. And the reason it took so long to go to Buchenwald was the Wehrmacht, the soldiers, they had right to the railroad tracks. They needed to bring, move soldiers, so they put our train on the side. And then we came to Buchenwald and there was no more labor or anything but in the mornings, during the morning when they were counting you could see the planes flying around.

Q: So you're now 18 years old, right.

A: Well we knew because when they came around during the day, they came at night and bombed the camp. But what they did at one point, they put all the prisoners in the SS barracks, outside, around the camp. And the SS came in there. They killed a good bunch of prisoners so but you knew that it was going to come because the town, **Weimar** which is near Buchenwald when they were putting the, bringing the bombs on you could jump in bed, in the straw sacks so but –

Q: What were your thoughts? Were you starting to get a little bit optimistic that maybe the war would end?

A: Not, you didn't know really, no. I didn't really know but then came to evacuation out of Buchenwald. And said if we don't come out, the prisoners didn't go out you see. There was one time when they tried to resist for instance right. The prisoners didn't go out so they put over the loudspeakers, if you don't go out we're going to shoot you out. Ok. So they came. It was the prisoners stayed in. They came. Shot us up. I was with two kids that had come with me from Auschwitz, right. And we hid under a straw sack in the barracks.

Q: In the barracks.

A: And one of the guards walked in and saw, most have saw that, took us out. He was there, ready to shoot right. And there was an officer, an SS officer that when we came, when I came out, he recognized me from Auschwitz. He was equal to a colonel. In rank right. He recognized

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me because he was in charge of the prisoners going out in Birkenau to IG Farben. And he recognized me. He took the three of us to a line to be evacuated. Right. So there was many, many good people and when I got out I found enough kids in Frankfurt. We found them in the camp and we signed and we got them out. He was one of the most wonderful guys there is.

Q: What was his name?

A: **Rochus, Houshofi** [ph] Rochus. He knew all the, he knew many of us because you saw them in the same line going out two, three years so you get to recognize people. So it was some –

Q: What was your health like at that time? Your physical condition?

A: Well by the time I was liberated I was all of, I think 68 or something like that, pounds. And I was in an American Red Cross hospital. They took me in a coma.

Q: You said you were in a coma?

A: Yeah. When I, after I was, I was liberated by Patton's army. On the **lansliv** [ph] of Bavaria.

Q: Ok you're in Buchenwald. You're leaving Buchenwald. You said that –

A: No, we were on death marches.

Q: Ok, that's what I wanted to ask if you were part of a death march?

A: Yeah. And every how many, maybe every hour or so they had a horse and carriage where you could put bodies in, as they were dying walking. They put them on these, on this carriage and then they made a mass grave. We had to dig a grave, mass grave and they buried maybe a hundred people or 50 people. I don't know that. So that was, I mean when you talk about that, you don't know if you're bad or health wise or anything like that but you know you're – listen I was 18 and a half at that time so but you, you do all of it somehow.

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Q: How long were you on the death march? Do you remember how many days it was or –

A: Oh about three, four months at least or maybe more.

Q: Of marching.

A: We stopped and asked the way north, how many we stopped about four or five different camps and each time you thought in the morning they would be liberated. The white flag was up and then all of a sudden they're back again. So but then finally Patton's army came.

Q: And where were you when Patton's army came?

A: On a Lansliv in upper Bavaria. You could see the number on the tanks. You could feel that in the ground. The whole ground was shaking. And within two minutes, boom, they were prisoners and we were watching them

Q: And you knew English right cause you had taken it in school?

A: Well I heard, learned a good bit of English.

Q: At school, when you were young.

A: And I lost some of it but then once I got American soldiers and started to talk and it was an American soldier. He didn't like -- from Brooklyn from ball park. Herbie Wiseman he should rest in peace. He says I don't like that name Julian. He gave me Jerry the name. And that's how I got it.

Q: He's the one who told you to be Jerry?

A: Yes.



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Q: Did he take you under his wing and did --

A: And I've used it all the time. Nobody knows me Julian. The only time I use Julian, for business. Julian caterers.

Q: This young American soldier kind of takes you under his wing? Is that what happened?

A: Well we, we met him. He used to come in, in Frankfurt. After I was in the hospital I find my way to Frankfurt.

Q: So you were liberated and then what happened right after liberation?

A: I was in an American Red Cross hospital.

Q: You said you were in a coma?

A: Yeah and then when I got out, I found my way to Frankfurt.

Q: To Frankfurt?

A: And I met this fellow. He was with the Third Division and he used to come into Frankfurt once a week for printing of the paper for the Third Division, Army division and he's the one that got us DP uniforms. And he took us into the mess hall. We were able to eat.

Q: Who is the us you're talking about? Friends of yours or --

A: No, you know regular mess hall, American mess hall.

Q: You said he took us into the mess hall. Who were the other people you were with, the other former prisoners? You were with other former prisoners?

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A: Maybe a couple not much. We were all –

Q: Spread out?

A: Spread out. And that's how I got into the mess hall. And then I got into Eisenhower headquarters in Frankfurt and I worked as an interpreter.

Q: When is this? What month in 45 is this?

A: In 45.

Q: What month are you talking about?

A: That's maybe May, the beginning of June. Right. And I found –

Q: How did you get into his headquarters? They knew you spoke English obviously?

A: How did I get what?

Q: Into his headquarters to be an interpreter? How did that happen?

A: I was a displaced person and I spoke English so they took me as an interpreter to help them in some way right. And they are the ones that got me started to get to America. They got me over to the immigration department people, and they, I think they reduced my age. They had to do it in some way to get me what was the law.

Q: To be younger than what you were?

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A: Yeah so by the time I would come out into America, not that somebody would refuse me. So then I came here and I was transferred over to Jewish child care. And I had a social worker, Mr. Fishman from, he was –

Q: How did you get over? By boat? You came by boat? What was the name of your boat?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Were there many other refugees like you on the boat?

A: No, not many refugees. Mainly soldiers. They stuck me in. I was swindled. When I was swindled, they made us some kind cause there was no refugees really coming yet.

Q: What month did you come here?

A: I don't remember to be honest. It may have been May, June, July, I don't remember.

Q: Of 45 or –

A: No, 45, oh yeah. No. No, I think 45, yeah.

Q: What did America mean to you?

A: What did America –

Q: America mean to you. You grew up in Germany. What did America mean to you, represent to you?

A: I don't think I had an opinion one way or the other.

Q: You just knew you were coming to America.

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A: The one thing that I did know is, America, that at that time, around that time, somewhere he sent back, Roosevelt sent back a ship of refugees, knowing that they would be deported or executed or whatever. That much I knew about America. It was not necessarily the greatest thing, but I had no idea of –

Q: Did you want to go to America? Is it something you wanted to do?

A: Oh yeah. I, well they said, I knew that there was people that immigrated before the war, a lot of German people so I knew that that, it can't be the wrong thing. It's got to be the right thing.

Q: You didn't want to stay in Germany?

A: No, not at the time, no.

Q: Did you feel German? Did you ever feel German?

A: No. Did I feel –

Q: German. You were born there, you had schooling there.

A: Didn't mean anything to me one way or the other.

Q: Your identity was as a Jew, not as a German. So you came to the United States? Is this in 45 we're talking about?

A: Yeah.

Q: 45. So how long were you doing the interpreting with Eisenhower's office?

A: How long I what?

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Q: Not that long.

A: What?

Q: You said you did some interpretation, interpreting English and German –

A: In Eisenhower headquarters. Not long.

Q: Not long. So then you come to the United States by boat and you get this social worker you said from this organization. And what did the social worker do for you?

A: I, there was still a registry for draft and I registered for the draft, right. And they drafted me.

Q: Where were you living?

A: I think the first, first place I had. There was a group setting of, in the Bronx where they put a lot of the Jewish kids that had no families. And from there, then they found different places where you could have a furnished room or and help you.

Q: When you were with that first group of young people, like you who were refugees did you talk to each other or tell each other your stories or experiences?

A: I wouldn't remember. I wouldn't remember.

Q: Share what you had been, you all had been through.

A: Nothing. Nothing.

Q: You said then you split up into different places?

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A: We split up and I was, I went to work, did I work there already or not? Maybe.

Q: You worked for a businessman? Who did you work for?

A: I think I was working. Then I registered for the draft and they drafted me.

Q: What kind of business was it that you worked at before you went to the draft?

A: Catering.

Q: A catering business. And who was –

A: His father.

Q: Who was it run by? Who owned the business?

A: Richter Mayer.

Q: And he was willing to take in a young –

A: Yeah sure. Sure, a young schlepper for little money.

Q: How did he know about you?

A: He didn't know. I left, I left, I was looking. I worked, first I worked for Donnybrook and **Shlonsky**. I got that job with my social worker.

Q: Was that a catering business too?

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A: No, Donnybrook and Shlonsky a coat and suit house on 500 Seventh Avenue. I remember like today, 37<sup>th</sup> street and I was looking for a few more dollars. Didn't, couldn't make a living with that. They were paying me I think \$30 a week or less. So by the time the food, and the nickel subway, it didn't -- so somebody said to me there's a Jewish group that meets on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn in front of the library. And I met his father's manager, Eric. And that's how I came to catering.

Q: That's how you got that job. Ok and then you got drafted you say?

A: Yeah. And I went to Fort Dix. I went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Columbia and I took basic training for the infantry and I got my first pass after about four or five weeks. And I go to town with a bus. In Columbia, it's one big street, Main Street. That's all there is. So I saw that and I said uh, I'll take a ride up on the bus and I'll see if I see something nice, I'll walk back. And I went I think one, to one light. The first light the bus stopped because when I walked on the bus, I walked to the back and sat down. The first stop we make, oh, there's an MP in the front and one in the back. I'm the only soldier. I'm looking with my uniform all right. I have my pass. You know what you're doing? No. Well back and forth, they thought I was playing with them. They took me off the bus and put me in the jeep and now I'm going back to camp and I got to report to the commander. And I got to stand up, give your soldier number, your what do they call it social number or whatever. I don't remember. And it didn't, it didn't sound right so he said to the, one of the guards, he says go to the company. And get his records. And when they brought back the records and he saw them, here a couple, a month. And I don't know that you can't sit in the back. I was in New York, didn't have that. So it turned out he was a, he was born here and his parents were from Germany and he spoke fluently German, Captain **Kershaw**. That was the end of that story. But from that I finished my basic training. I had an Indian sergeant from the 82<sup>nd</sup> airborne and he talked me into airborne, so I took training and I took, I made one jump, training jump that's it. That's enough.

And then they found out exactly where and what. And I went back to Germany as an interpreter. And I was there maybe six months or eight months and the draft law was cut and the commander in charge called me in and he says I would give you a rank he says, log officer, which is the best rank in the army. You get the uniform. And they can still give you meals but you're an officer.

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But they are for stones, for stock for stuff like that and but you have to be three years. I was in the army, give me one year. Then I made a mistake because I was at the time, I would have been I was I think 20 or 21, 20 years I'll be out at 41. Everything ahead of me and all my benefits and everything. So but –

Q: When did you become a citizen?

A: I think I didn't make citizen papers. I missed the date in the army. They had 90 days. I missed it by one or two days. So finally I didn't think about it anymore. And finally somebody says to me you should have been a citizen. Well, all right. They said why don't you write a letter and I wrote a letter to can't think of his name. He was a congressman that represented Brooklyn, east New York and that whole area, a Jewish fellow. A nice guy. And I wrote a letter to him and a week later I got a letter back, report to Columbus Circle, whatever department they had there. You go in there and I went in there and held my hand up. The judge stamped it you're a citizen, Amen, one, two three. Cause I had spent time in the army.

Q: How did you feel becoming an American citizen?

A: I didn't really make much of it one way or the other but I was already by that time I was busy already or I was working and so on so.

Q: What was it like to wear an American army uniform after what you had been through?

A: Great, fine.

Q: Were you very proud?

A: As a matter of fact I met some friends of my brother's in Frankfurt after. And I went to see them so it was all, it was great. Nice. I came with all the chocolate with all the stuff. I could have made a fortune at the time, but I walked away from it because I figured as a, as an



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interpreter and counter intelligence corps and criminal investigation division. That was part of the stuff that I used to work for.

Q: What can you tell me that you did and can you tell me what –

A: Well we were investigating for Nazis and –

Q: Did you interrogate German soldiers? Did you interrogate them?

A: Yeah.

Q: You did?

A: So.

Q: How did it feel to do that as a Jewish young man?

A: Not. Wasn't bad.

Q: And losing your family? How did it feel, knowing that your family lost their lives because –

A: You really, you know at that point already you don't think about anything no more. You got your own life, cause nothing, nothing is coming back. That water is gone under the thing, no use. You're going out. You maybe got married, have a family or whatever. But the money that I could have made over there. They were throwing out the cigarettes, cases, clothes, water packed out of the windows. I could have made a fortune, right. I said to myself you know you want to become citizen, it's like a cop. A cop can't be a thief. I didn't do nothing. I came out clean and forget about and I worked. I worked my brains out in catering. That's it.

Q: Were you involved with the Nuremburg trials at all or not?

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A: Was I involved what?

Q: With the Nuremburg trials at all. Any of the trials that the Germans in Nuremburg.

A: No, I didn't.

Q: So then you came back to the United States and did you go back to that catering business?

A: Yep.

Q: How long were you there for?

A: Except for a time that I took out because my wife, she didn't like the idea of a caterer working weekends. And her friends, everybody is going out. So I tried -- my landlady's grandson came back from the army and they had bought him a business. It was Sweetheart Lingerie. They made lingerie for pregnant women. So I learned that under the GI bill. I learned and then I worked for another company, Scene Proof another big company. But nobody would ever give you enough money. So I went to my wife's grandmother. She was -- a wonderful relationship with her and I said, she says boychiko, **gay with a gast wid your mataladen** (foreign language phrase - ph). Next case. And I went back to catering because now I was not working in catering. I was taking money out of the bank to go out Friday night. So what good is it, so.

Q: When did you get married?

A: The first time I was married in 1950.

Q: Was your wife also a survivor?

A: No. I'm not a dummy.

Q: Do you have children?

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A: I have three children. And then I divorced her. I married another lady, Catholic, very religious Catholic and I had the most wonderful family relationship. I had no children with her. And David knows her. And she died, unfortunately she died of leukemia within four months, after 33 years. And then I was -- my friend, one of my best friends died. We were sitting Shiva at his daughter's house in Alpine and they were kibitzing me, her friends. Oh you want to meet somebody. I said hey, by that time I was already alone two years. And I said, I heard that story before. So they gave me a number. I called and sure enough, we went out. And it was in 2001, I think 2001.. 2011 she died of lymphoma. The worst kind in the world so.

Q: Then have you retired from the catering business?

A: Sure, my friend, the girl that you met downstairs, she made me retire. She says enough. I put 60 years in. That's enough.

Q: Can we talk now about some of your thoughts about and your feelings about your life and what you went through. You obviously lost part of your childhood and –

A: David. No, no I want the paper I gave you.

Q: You had said that you lost part of your childhood. Do you ever feel you ever got any part of it back? You lost part of your childhood because of what happened to you.

A: Yeah well I had a lawyer. At the time and I'm going back to the late 50s maybe. Late, late 50s. He was a German attorney, **Alberti**. And he was doing restitution work and he had, for those years he had all the contacts with all the different German offices that you would have to deal with. And he got me, they gave me money for loss of education, loss of family, loss of whatever, whatever they –

Q: You're talking about reparations?

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A: Yeah and he also, I got a, I got a monthly check direct from Berlin from the area I come from.

Q: Are you still getting it?

A: Yeah. You got to sign every year that you're still kicking, kicking around. But yeah I maybe I just read part of this here to you. This should be part of my life story cause of all the things that I lived through and it is really like a storybook. In some instances it is hard to believe and to understand but it was all of those years in Germany from 1930 to 45 and to the end of World War Two. I was born. My mother's name, I gave it to you and all that, right. For years I tried many different organizations to locate some part of my families without success, anywhere. For some information I received from Jüdische Gemeinde what I told you about. (pause) No, there's not much else here. But and part of the things that I got written here where I'm trying for the book to go out. I think I had, I think most of my life, adult life, I constantly thought of work. And I think the reason I pushed for all that is that gave me no time to think. But it also at the same time probably made me a very hard person. When I say hard it's, I didn't ever even discuss it with my kids, very much, none. And I have very little relationship with my kids. And as much as I've tried one way or the other to do and it doesn't work. They want to talk about -- I couldn't get along with my wife at the time. When we were divorced, you know this business is so crazy you go when you got through with the job at night. You go to the cafeteria and maybe those years in Brooklyn or on Long Island you go to Garfield's, or you go to Duval's on King's highway and you sit and everybody is there chewing the rag about the job they had and this one says I got so much for the job. This one, the other one. Everybody is just sawing a lot of fan. But it was just to relax after a long day and a long weekend. And she would think I had played around. I came home too late. It just didn't work. It was endless. But other than that, I did as father taught me, I learned a lot from him.

Q: What did Mr. Mayer teach you?

A: Catering.

Q: Yeah but you said you learned a lot.

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A: I learned a lot.

Q: In the catering field you mean?

A: Yeah, in the catering field. Absolutely. It's a crazy business. It's never the same but it's like everything else. It's the two things that go on in life. Weddings and funerals, so no matter what happens, that job is going to go on. So if the truck gets there or the truck didn't get there, or you didn't have this or you didn't have that, everything is going to go on.

Q: Are you a member of any survivor organizations? Do you belong to –

A: No. To be honest with you, I have never had any -- I've gone out to a couple of schools.

Q: To speak to the children?

A: Yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact I'm going Monday again to another one in Brooklyn. But I, I never found any real comfort with any of the people that were in camps or so on because they constantly keep on going back and that's all they talk about. And when they tell people about it, they want to talk about the atrocity. Everybody knows the atrocities, mine, yours or whoever's it was. Let's talk about finding a way to be able to live. I have and part of the thing that I wrote I took out some from papers. We are 70 years later and we've got the same headache for whatever reason with refugees. Nobody knows what it is to be a refugee. I do. Not the fact that I came here and I was a refugee. The fact to be out, when I look at these people marching there in the fields, they got no room to go to the bathroom, take a shower, get a warm meal. People, they don't know. They say oh refugees are what. But what do they know? That's what irks me that it can't come across that we don't come to some kind of point in a modern world. Amen. End of story. Lot of people, a lot of Jewish people don't agree with me 100 percent but I'm sorry. I would rather see something good come out of it, some way somehow. Will it come in my time, or will I be able to do it? I don't know. Questionable.

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Q: What are your thoughts about Germany today? Have you been back, did you ever go back?

A: I've been there three times, four times. One time I was invited by the city of Berlin. They invited all former Berliners and they paid for the trip. They paid for the finest hotels. Was ten days, to the finest theaters and what have you. Treated, gold, they gave you spending money and everything. They try everything to -- I was there. The second time I was there it was people that they, Jewish people that I don't know how old you are but let's say you could have a father as a Nazi right. And they don't know how to handle it, if you killed maybe Jews or something. They don't know themselves how to handle it. So they have like what do they call it? For drunks. The anonymous things for drunks. They go around in groups. And everybody tells their story. And this one person came up and she was there, she's supposed to -- was her turn to talk. And she couldn't make it. She just couldn't get herself to do it. And it was a Jewish person that was there as a guest. I picked up her hand and brought her there and started her, right. So many of the people in Germany. Yes, there may be some that are still there. But there's also many of them there, it's a new generation. And you take this what's her name, Merkel, right. The reason that she is the way she is to begin with. She grew up in the Russian sector during the Cold War and she had nothing as a person. So she appreciates. That's why she's calling for all the refugees, said you open the doors. That's her. But she's German. Well you know oh I wouldn't ride a German car, right. And what's his name, the comedian. The Jewish comedian. He uses those expression. He said they won't use the, won't ride in a Germany car because they can't afford it. That's all it means. And the same like he tells them when they talk about Washington. He said bring in a few Jews over there they'll show the government how to make money.

Q: How would you describe yourself in today's world, as an American or a Jew or a German? How would you label yourself?

A: Well I think I'm an American. No question about that. I mean --

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Q: Spiritually do you think what you went through , the terrible tragedy that you went through and that your family went through, affect you in your thoughts about religion? Did it make you feel more Jewish, less Jewish?

A: Well I was always associated with rabbis of every nature. In catering. You're going to the different temples. And then you have the new group that's supervises the kosheres. There was just an article the other day in the Wall street Journal, Reb **Bashkin**. I don't know if you read the – Bashkin was, had another name. The guy with a beard this long. He was one of the nicest guys. I used to buy all the meat from him. Wonderful. And he got stung about seven years ago. He had none, refugees warden not citizen. He had about 200 of them. They arrested him and then they arrested him in Texas. They were this, they were that. He's been in the can. They gave him 27 years and he's been there already seven years. They guy hasn't had, not a bad bone in his body. And they wrote the article that Obama should pardon him.

Q: But I meant what you had been through. What I meant was because of what you had been through during the war and the loss of your family, do you think that affected you spiritually in any way?

A: Well. I've gone, I've lived through a religious home. I lived with all different type of rabbis in the food business, I was married to a Catholic woman. And her family was Catholic. She had a cousin, a priest, spoke all kinds of languages and taught in school, up state. He was a professor. And -- Father Jim. And I had some wonderful rabbis that I worked with, some that gave Jewish names to my kids. They're all different religion, different part of the Jewish religion. And I listen to occasionally that minister on TV Sunday mornings. Jolson, what's his name. He's on channel four. He's a -- I don't know what they call it, Protestant or whatever. I was in Florida and I had a girl that took care of my apartment when I wasn't there. And she went to a church in North Palm Beach. Real old time Americans. Real old time gentile Americans. They come to church dressed with suits and tie and what have you. And she was a born again Christian and that's what the church she was going to and I went with her. I went to church how many times with the wife. And I went with her and when we got through, the minister greeted everybody in the hallway outside the church and she introduced me to him. And it was in May or April. It was

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warm and I took my jacket off. The air conditioning was only in the church itself. Out the hallway the doors are open and it's warm and I took my jacket off. And somebody noticed the number. And she introduced me to him and he says to me you're not old enough and we had quite a conversation. All the rest of the people there waiting. Right. I want you to know when I came home about a week later, I had the most wonderful letter from this minister, a warm letter, a beautiful letter. You'll find conservative rabbis or somebody. You wouldn't get anything like that from them. The only ones that you'll get it from, I go now to a **kabah** [ph] same as Annette goes. The guy is a wonder. He's got a beard down to here, but he's very warm. He's very, he inquires if I'm not there. If I didn't come, she doesn't come. He calls her on the telephone. His wife invited us again tomorrow night for Shabbos dinner in the house. We couldn't accept because I'm going to go back. I'll be on the way back. So when you ask me, as far as I'm concerned, there's one guy up there directs the traffic. You, me, Catholic, I don't care who it is. I make no deviations from that.

Q: Have you been to Israel?

A: I've been in Israel twice. And I got to go one more time. I hope I make it. I have family there from my mother. That's the original and I'm the only one that's left of that **Goldschmidt** family. Nobody else left. So

Q: Before we close is there anything else you wanted to say, do you have grandchildren?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is there any message to your grandchildren you wanted to say?

A: Any message?

Q: Message to your grandchildren.



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A: I don't. I -- they came here only a couple of months ago with my daughter from Seattle and they all have the wrong idea from the mother even to a standpoint, because they want to talk about the wars of 50 years. My daughter, the two of them. And my son so the kids are not on the same wavelength. We had a wonderful meeting. We were here. And he's supposed to, one guy is supposed to let me know what he's going to do and he was applying for different jobs or whatever, right. Nothing. So if I have grandchildren, the grandchildren I have, my last wife that passed away, her daughter and her son and those kids are with me all the time. Thanksgiving, what how they call every day. How do you feel? Next case. What else you want to know? If there's any message to leave it'll be to those kids, all of them. And that's it.

Q: Anything that we haven't covered that you wanted to talk about before we finish?

A: No, we haven't covered how to be a millionaire anymore. Well, no I think --

Q: Have you said what you wanted to say?

A: I came on the train and I called my doctor. I was there Tuesday and doctor that his parents used and he says to me, he says you're the one man that comes in. You don't always come in and you're complaining it hurts here, it hurts there. You never complain about anything. He says I have to ask you, I have to push. Are you short of breath or -- so he says, but the way you are that way, he says your looks, your appearance doesn't change and your system doesn't change. It's always the same. So she took a blood test Tuesday and like he always does. I called on the train cause it wasn't there yesterday so I called her on the train as we're riding. She says well he says you're going to make another visit so don't worry. That's it. I think that no, I think you have primarily you got pretty much all of it. The only thing that, that I'm missing that I got to try to find a way to write a book or something. It's a lot. I don't know if I'm able to do it. I'm going to try. I haven't got a fortune of money because my first wife that died with leukemia, the only thing that kept her alive when no chemo could help her, the only thing that helped her was have a recycling thing of the blood. And it came with a separate unit. It didn't belong to the hospital, no matter where. And it comes with a doctor and two nurses and those years I'm talking about 99, this it was like 12 to 14 thousand dollars a pop. And the doctor said to me, he said at some point

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Medicare is not going to -- so I went through a bundle of money. But so I'm not rich. I can't afford to spend a million on a book but I would, I think my story is enough that it should go out there somewhere. I think it's much more than **Elie Wiesel** talked about. It's I think more informing, it's more different. Elie Wiesel was only in Auschwitz I think maybe a year and a half or something like that or two. He doesn't have anything too much to say, never about the other guy. I think with him it was, it became -- he had good intention but it became a money making thing of speeches or what have you, but be that as it may, that's the only thing that's missing.

Q: Thank you very much for doing the interview. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Julian Reuter.

(end)