

Talking with Barbara Seligman at the DC convention center, 1983. Barbara, what was your mother's maiden name?

Jakubowicz, Sara Jakubowicz. My maiden name is Rosenbaum.

[INAUDIBLE]

We were talking about the role of religion in your life.

That's right.

Your childhood memories, religious upbringing.

That's right. Our mother was then European upbringing, which was very lovely and I thought wholesome and very-- well, it was something that carried me through my life in a very supportive way. I recall [INAUDIBLE]

And holidays, we would observe, naturally. It's just a way of life that we had at home. And friends. It played out.

It was very important to me, even in Auschwitz. And it provided me with a lot of hope. And I knew that we would, one day, come out of it, even not as few as we did. But I knew there would be somebody to come and tell the story-- not the story in a sense, even the religious aspect of it, that would have-- that they were out to destroy within us.

For instance, I recall a particular time in Auschwitz when Yom Kippur came. Food was scarce, almost nonexistent. Yet on the day of Yom Kippur, there were cables, as they call them, I think, today. I would call them trash cans, or something of that order. And they were lined up on this long, long camp of several thousands of people.

And testing our strengths to see if we would act--

Trash cans with food in them?

Yeah, well not the trash-- they were really not trash cans.

Bins?

Bins, OK. And food, good, thick food, as we called it there. And they were just lined up and tested our strengths to see how many would go for it. And we surprised them. Very few, maybe, but very, very few headed for the food. And the food remained there till sundown.

And no one had touched it. And sent [INAUDIBLE], and so did the SS, taking the food away. And so, we felt this will not shatter our belief. What we have been taught, the life we have lived until then. And so we endured.

But it was just--

You mean that none of the people ate the food?

No, I said just very, very, very few. I would say just 1%.

Do you think those-- do you remember assuming that those were people who were not religious people?

I really could not say. That would be very difficult to tell. I would be putting value judgment on that, and I am not about to do that. I'm just saying, that many went, perhaps 1%, and for their own reasons that was right for them. And that's OK. But the majority did not.

And when sundown came, and we could have partaken of it, it was removed. So it was just another way of testing us,

and we, in turn, responding.

Did you ever feel that any of these experiences were a way of God's testing you? How did you handle your relationship to God?

Well, one day, my daughter asked me, mommy, how was it that you remained observant and religious? It was all you had experienced? And my answer to her was, first of all, I never blamed God for this to begin with. I still feel God had nothing to do with it. People doing to people.

And also, frankly, I think I couldn't afford to lose him, to let go of him. I needed him much more than he needed me. And so I just never even gave it a thought. It was just-- I would have to say, it's just the way you live a life, up until that point when you're being tested, that carries you.

It was beautifully done, without any difficult impositions, you know, strictness. And we were comfortable. I was truly, truly comfortable in my setting.

And well, truth is that I tried, when I established my own home, and raising my family-- I did likewise. And my children are following the same manner. So it was comfortable for them. At least comfortable enough.

I'm sure they make their own changes, I must have made mine. But as a whole, we're here, and we believe in God. And we know he will see us through.

So if I'm perhaps contradicting myself somewhere, but I'm not sure, I do believe yes, there is God. And we are definitely indebted to him for his guidance.

During the camps, did you seek out other friends who were religious, too? Were most of the people in the camp--

No, not at all, not at all. We were not segregated in that way. In other words, everybody was there, religious, non-religious, young and old. Very few old, of course, because those were separated right away.

In other words, our association didn't link us with the religious, necessarily? No, not at all.

You were comfortable with the other girls who were religious?

No, not at all-- no, I'm equally comfortable, even to this day, always was. I had Gentile girlfriends at home. I have a lot of Gentile friends now. No, I don't really think so.

It wasn't-- maybe that part of my brand of religion is a little bit-- is it liberal? No, it's not liberal, it's just I feel comfortable with all people. I really do.

And as far as I'm concerned, I respect their religion. So far, everybody has respected mine, at least on the surface. What was done in the past, I mean, because of the fact that we are Jews, you know? I don't think religion played in it, because before conservative, Orthodox, nonbelievers, they were Jews.

They did not select them according to the degrees that they practiced religion, or observed.

I could imagine that, in the camps, there would be some kind of a natural segregation of the women who had been Orthodox, and then, as opposed to the women who had been more secularized. And perhaps even a distaste for each other.

Well, if they were fortunate enough to have-- like I was fortunate enough to be with my two other sisters, and I don't think-- I just can't recall. I've been trying to be as honest about this as I possibly can, and go back, in fact, seeing the setting-- we were just mainly busy, or concentrating on staying together. And not to be separated.

Actually, there was no synagogue that we would have been offered to go to, to show who is going. I couldn't even identify anybody who-- we all looked alike with the shaven heads. I couldn't tell. I did not approach the person, are you Orthodox from home? Because there, home was completely gone, you were just one people, in one place.

And if I wanted to approach you, for instance, I did not say, are you a religious from home? I couldn't tell, because you were shaven, I was shaven. And so we all looked alike.

There was no Kashrut observed. I was eager to get that piece of bread that lasted us for three days. And I was just as eager to get, from wherever it came, it didn't matter, that liquid. Whatever-- I still don't know what it was. Some sort of liquid.

Now, nobody in the same-- you could have been very Orthodox, Hasidic, and partaken of it the same way as I, had I not been at all-- I mean, non-observant. So I can't help you on that. I really can't say much about that.

I did not experience it. I, myself, my sisters, we did not experience. OK, nobody discriminated against us if we were not equally religious. We had one goal in mind, one aim, just stay alive, come out of that and this our lives in the manner that--

You talked about your religion carrying you through. Was it talking about religion? Was there talk, or was it mostly what was inside your head?

Mainly what was inside. We did not talk about religion. We tried-- there was a time we forgot to whether it was Friday night, when it came and when it went. But we didn't have calendars, of course. And we didn't know-- but we could sense in the year when Pesach, for instance, would be upon us, or it should be here. It's springtime.

And it would have been difficult to tell when, exactly, according to-- even if we under a Christian calendar, would have been whatever date. It didn't coincide, because it never fell on the same day, according to the Hebrew calendar. So we had no way of knowing. I don't remember.

But people-- there were people that were able, older people, that were able to keep a calendar either in their minds, heads, or somehow the news traveled that it's Rosh Hashanah time-- it's Rosh Hashanah on such a day. Or like for instance, I mentioned Yom Kippur, we knew that, because the Germans knew it.

Because on those days, when a holiday, a major holiday, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they would do their worst. They imposed the strictest punishments, the selections were fierce. And so we pretty much knew.

That, interestingly enough, and when things went bad on the frontier. We would know that-- we could tell when things went bad, politically.

But I don't know-- I think we do a lot on religion, and it's here to stay.

Were there any religious ceremonies?

No, not at all. The first religious ceremony that we experienced was right after the war, when we were liberated by the American army. And a Jewish chaplain came and said Kaddish with us. And we had been the first people he had come across in these camps. And immediately set up a service to say Kaddish.

After the liberation, everybody went back-- some changed.

What was the most important religious holiday to you while you were in the camps?

In the camps-- there was no important holiday. It was just every day was important. Every day we were still there was a religious experience. I mean, no, there was no religious importance in the camp, really, other than just the constant belief that this-- we will do it. You have to come out of there.

Like religion, we never woke up, at least I didn't, waking up. And I never failed to say the [NON-ENGLISH], as I learned from childhood. And when I went to bed. But there was no siddur to say prayers, whether it was Saturday. And usually, on those days you couldn't, because that's when they were really taking you out on kommandos, so to speak, which meant doing chores. I mean, really nonsensical chores, such as carrying rocks from place to place.

When did they do this?

It didn't matter. It was daily, but they didn't stop because it was Saturday. On a Sunday, it would be an easier day. And also unpredictable.

Actually, every day was terribly unpredictable. One hour to the next-- it was unpredictable. It was just a constant living of not knowing and expecting the never-ending zahlappells, as they called them, coming out, and inspections and selections. And now for this I have to--

Finally, one day, even though volunteering was a very inadvisable thing to do, because you never know what you volunteered for, but at one point, when we older children became human chains for the younger children-- in other words, as the SS were selecting the children up until age eight, I believe-- we older ones had to surround them. In other words, make a human chain, and not let them run away.

Because the running way meant running away from the crematorium. Because that's what they were headed for. And my sisters and I had decided then and there that we will not be participating in this thing, once we knew what this was all about. And with the next transport out, voluntary or involuntary, we would be on it. Not knowing-- because usually they would say, if you volunteer, you just never returned from anywhere. And it was that way.

And this one day, there was a-- we recognized the Wehrmacht, which is entirely different from the SS. And there was a group of officers. And the SS woman came in, says, well, we need 250 volunteers for work in an ammunition factory. And my sisters and I, we looked at each other, and we said, OK, let's go.

Of course, let's go, it doesn't mean-- it's not so simple. You had to be in the group. Because when we said, let's go, everybody had the same idea. And everybody went.

But OK, we were fortunate enough, and we did fall that we were the last cut-off of the rows of five, of 200-- a group of 250 people, who indeed, went to a camp where this factory did exist. Because I'm here to tell you about it.

And so we were very, very fortunate that we ended up the group in back of us, not one returned. So I think, I was trying to bring up a point, but I lost it.

Oh, yes-- not knowing, I think I was earlier mentioning not knowing, what the events will bring from hour to hour, day to day. And that's when we left to [PLACE NAME]. And even then, it was a big struggle to stay-- because prior to that, you don't just say, you want to be in that transport, and therefore you are. You have to qualify, such as going parading before the SS, and showing that you're physically able.

I had some blemishes, birthmarks on my stomach, which were mistaken for rashes. So I was put on the other side, not returning my clothes, which meant only one thing-- that you are not desirable. And miraculously, I did sneak back up [INAUDIBLE].

And I made my way back with my two sisters. I felt I had nothing to lose, anyway. I was already-- I mean, as far as they were concerned, they knew where I was going. But I wasn't sure.

I guess, in that sense, you show God the way, and you help him. And so religion, if you want to put it in those terms, showed up, I believe. And the strings [INAUDIBLE].

So I'm here. We did go to work in that camp. The camp was much more humane, because they needed-- they truly

needed us as workers. Because everyone at that point-- was toward the end of the war-- and everybody in Germany were gone.

And the work was hard and the hours were long-- very, very long. But we did get better food, and it was all worth it. Because somehow we felt-- we were surrounded by barbed wires, we were guarded by the SS, but it was also a camp of others-- or prisoners of war, which had the freedom, and we did not. We were nonetheless treated as-- in fact, we belonged to Buchenwald.

And I also experienced the-- well, it was probably-- it was tragic enough for me, I'm still suffering from it. And as I was loading ammunition, I fell off the truck and under it, and had gone half-way across my pelvis. And so I was paralyzed. And I have to say maybe, God played a role in that, too, because if the bombs-- that is the railroad tracks had not been bombed, they would have shipped me immediately to where I belonged to Buchenwald. And of course, that would have been the end of me.

But the SS Oberscharführer, who was really sensing the end-- this was in January of 1945-- yeah, and I lay for 10 weeks, paralyzed. And I do think God had something to do with it, because under normal conditions, today, when doctors viewed my x-rays, they said it's not only amazing that I'm alive, but that I'm walking straight.

Twice they have said that to me, different people. And I have to believe that God had something to do with the railroad tracks. But at that point, even the SS had softened, because ordinarily, he would have had to just shoot me on sight. Because I was not working, I was not productive. And therefore, I was undesirable.

And he would have had to deal with me.

Are you saying it was almost like it was just-- it was meant to be that you were--

I definitely believe that, yes, indeed. I do, I do, I do. Yes, I did. I do, and that strong-- my love for my two sisters, and seeing their faces, that as I lay there, I felt worse for them than I did for myself. And I said, I have to do it for them.

Because they needed you.

Well, it would have been just tragic. Because well, we never knew what to do-- what we would have done had we been separated. Because whether to go, where one goes, volunteer to go to the same place, because we would have never known who was selected for life or who was selected for death.

And so we decided-- first, we said, no matter what, we stick together. And then later on, as we knew what was going on, we said, no, that's not fair. Suppose I am sentenced by them, the SS, not to make it. Doesn't mean that I want you to follow. On the contrary, you have to fight all the more.

And make it.

Yeah. So it's intertwined with religion. I cannot leave God out of this. No way. I don't know.

You said that you always had hope.

Oh, sure, never lost hope.

Hope that what?

Hope that this will end and we will survive.

We meaning?

Collectively-- those-- we, meaning as many as possible. I mean, in our case, the 250 girls, we all survived. Many died

after, of course. But we did see the liberation. We were liberated. And we died later on, many.

It wasn't the result of the immediate death, you know, I mean, shortly after that. It's not [AUDIO OUT]

One of the things I want to ask you about is friendships, because only once-- well, let me amend that. I so seldom have read about the importance of friendships in the camps, and I'd like to hear more about that.

Friendships were indeed important. But again, the setting wasn't-- it's sort of difficult to explain to someone, even to my children, what it was like. I mean, the setting, and again, friendships. You were so-- you were just taken off-- first of all, either you were working for 14, 16, 18 hours. And if you had a few hours, you were asleep. And you were getting ready.

I would say, especially in the smaller camp, later on when we were in Torgau, friendships did exist. Because--

Torgau was?

Torgau was near Leipzig, it was the ammunition factory for which we volunteered from Auschwitz. And so it was different, because we were in groups, smaller groups, not already is conducive to developing friendships. It's not as chaotic. We worked in shifts.

Though, in fact, it's interesting, but I have to say this-- and I'm glad to say it, in fact. If there's anything decent to say about this whole mess, I have to say that there was one German Oberscharführer-- sorry, foreman in this factory. And he was positively bewildered with us. He didn't know-- he probably never had-- he had never seen a Jew before.

As I think back about it now, I am quite certain he had never seen one. Because when we arrived at this ammunition factory, he just didn't know what to make of us. Here, we were very young, frail-- what are we doing working with these bombs? They're heavy, and the conveyor belt lifting, rolling, marking.

I mean, things that go into the makings of bombs. And he-- we were watched by the SS women all the time.

SS women?

Women, sure, sure. And he looked around, and when he would look at something else, but talking to me, so that he would not be detected by the SS. And would ask me, who am I, and what are we doing here? So I said, well, we were brought here by the SS.

And he says, where are your parents? I said, well, we don't have our parents. They're in Auschwitz. He says, what is that?

But I would have to say, he did not know what-- it was far enough away for him to know about it, and of course, the German papers did not elaborate on the daily happenings of Auschwitz-- other than their victories.

Interesting, because so often you hear it said, that it was impossible for the Germans not to have known. But you're saying, it depended on the proximity to the camps.

Yes, well this particular camp-- this is in Torgau. This is an isolated little place. It's not a big place. And I would imagine-- well, this is the way he presented himself, or says, you are too young to have left your parents. I said, well, we didn't, not deliberately. We were taken. He says, why? What for?

I said, well, because we were Jews. He says, Jews? This just takes place in German. And he says, yes, but he points to his nose.

But to our knowledge, Jews look like-- you don't look Jewish. Our Jews look like this. And points to his nose, very long, and a sort of a hunchback. Which is-- he says, that's the way we know them from the newspapers. If it's written by, of course--

And he was just-- looked again. He says, oh, you poor things. You know, and from then on, I sort of struck friendship. We touched his soft spot somewhere, because he shared with me political news, such as giving me a little bit encouragement, saying, the frontiers are [AUDIO OUT].

And later on, sharing a sandwich with me. And that was unbelievable. And really unheard of. And to this day, I'm very grateful to him. I have to think--

Think about him often?

I think about him often. I mean, often meaning, times like this. If I recall certain times of year, and there's flashbacks, no matter what you do. It just carries you through.

April 26th cannot come and go without remembering my liberation day. My children-- we celebrate that day as my second birthday. Which I consider even more important than my natural birthday. So April 26 is a very important time in my life, and my children remember it with cards, and [INAUDIBLE].

Given that our theme is talking about religion, I wonder how your religious feelings shaped the way you thought about the Germans, about the Nazis? The different categories-- the SS, and as opposed to perhaps that German.

Well, I'm not quite sure how I can put that in context. It was-- the SS and religion, they saw us as Jews. And beyond that, as I said earlier, they did not discriminate. I think they saw us as Jews, not religious Jews, because there were the Orthodox, the non-believers, the-- just everybody. So I really don't know just how to--

How did you see them?

In a religious sense? Did I see them as--

When you say, the SS, I'm not sure what-- can you clarify that?

Well, I suppose that one question that comes to mind is the question of forgiveness.

Oh, I see.

The Christian way, for example, to forgive people who have done wrong to you, but it's not necessarily the Jewish way to forgive people who do things that are very wrong to you.

Well, it would be very difficult for me to forgive and SS, or the SS people that are killed my parents and my brothers.

Do you ever feel you should? Or do you feel--

No, I don't feel I should. No, I don't feel I should. I feel, I should work towards not ever happening-- this ever happening again. And for that matter to any other people. I think this whole thing should be an indictment of the society, as a whole [INAUDIBLE], altogether. I mean, I think it should be an indictment of all the wrong atrocities that take place today, too. With other people.

And of course, no, I cannot forgive. Certainly not forget. But I'm not there to take revenge. I mean, it will not be constructive. I'd much rather work in a peaceful way towards--

How to go about it, I don't know. It worked for a while, it seemed. Right after the war. But unfortunately, it didn't last.

What is that?

Well, we seem to have found a little-- at least the world, not just depicting any one people-- was sort of ashamed. I

mean, they were ill at ease, America, England, all of those peace-loving nations, actually knew what was going on. And yes, indeed, they knew what was going on. And did nothing about it. Not just the Germans, but all--

So I have to hold the whole society for having done nothing. And there, for a while, that was the-- well, they were not quite comfortable with themselves, the refugees. The DP camps were set up, for which I worked a great deal, like my husband, who was very much involved in that he was a chaplain in the American Army.

And he was sort of a liaison between the DP camps and American army. But the army, yes, under American participation [INAUDIBLE] organizations were helping to set up the DP camps. DP camps meaning displaced persons, no place to go, after the war.

And when all of this started coming out, that's when all these countries became-- yes, they were a little bit [INAUDIBLE], not having been in-- not having done what they probably-- I'm hesitant in saying it, but they stood by and let it happen, OK. That's what I really mean to say.

Just there is no other way of saying it, OK? And it bothers me, if anything angers me now, hurts-- hurts, really, more than anger. You experience the psychological pain that is very hard to think that I could have still had my parents, but they're not, just because there was nobody [INAUDIBLE] reach out.

So it's related-- if you mean, again, you don't forget, you don't forgive, but you don't want to do unto them what was done unto you, that is not right.

Do you sometimes feel you have to stop yourself from wanting to inflict on them?

No, I never entertained that thought. I just never did, even as I walked out of the camp, at the time when it was quite fresh. Even then, I walked the streets of Germany, and I never had the urge or desire to-- I didn't look at them kindly. I did not embrace them, I did not-- I would not have sought out their friendships.

No, Germany after the war was not a place by choice. It was a place of necessity, awaiting immigration. We returned home, and no one was there. There was no-- particularly for us, it was Russia-- occupied by Russians. And so I headed back west in search any members of my family that I might find.

And we did meet, I joined with two brothers. I'm very grateful for that. Even though two others did not return, and my parents, [INAUDIBLE]. And my father was [? 60 years ?] old or something like that.

It's sort of hard to take. And I could never understand until my child was born what it meant for a mother to let go of her own child, as I saw them separated. I remember that Susan was born. She was four weeks old, and I was still running to the crib every night to see if she was there.

That reminds me, I've been reading a book called Voices from the Holocaust, I think the saddest thing that I read, of all, was an incident-- a woman says that she remembers that when she arrived, the transport, the rumors were that women with children would be saved. And many women ran around grabbing children.

And then, another rumor came-- a counter rumor-- saying that women with children would not be saved, and [INAUDIBLE].

Well, to be fair and honest about it, I have not witnessed the throwing away. I witnessed where mothers were clinging to their children desperately as the SS were separating them and trying to, literally, tear them apart. In many instances, they did. And they did get separated. In other instances, the SS finally said, OK, go with your child, idiot. Meaning--

They would be killed.

We did hear rumors that there were kapos set up, which means already people that had been there before. They would mumble under their breath, let go of your little children, like giving us clues.



And even the kapos were trying to help save you?

Yeah, or say to the older ones, don't-- giving us little clues. But when they said to us, the SS, nice and strong, and very charmingly, in fact, said, all right, the old ones and the children go to one side, because the young ones, we're working out to have to provide for them. And at that point-- at that point, I felt that, oh, well, old ones, we need them to work.

And she was beautiful, and young. And my sister said, quick started gathering her babushka, sort of, to make herself look older. Now, that bothers me, that I [INAUDIBLE]. And I don't know, it's something I've been working at all these years. What she have been here? Did we help in destroying her? I don't know.

The decisions you had to make, instantaneously.

Yet, later on, months later, we were sort of grateful that our-- meaning, the three of us, my two sisters and I were talking-- in a way, I'm glad mother isn't here-- mommy isn't here to experience this, or to go through with this.

So that has been very, very difficult. And I don't know. And I never will. And I have to leave that to [INAUDIBLE].

Were you ever faced with a decision-- were you ever asked to become a kapo?

No, no, no. You know, I'm still frail and insignificant-looking. You had to be older. After all, [INAUDIBLE].

I see. So since we were talking about the role of religion, do you suppose-- what kind of people were the kapos? Do you suppose that they had any religious [INAUDIBLE]?

I really don't know. I didn't keep contact. There was one kapo-- I'm sure their roles were very, very difficult. I would never want to put myself in-- in fact, it would be difficult to judge them. Of course, somebody might ready to say, there was no other way. Don't cooperate, and you don't survive. Maybe there wouldn't have been that many survivors.

Who knows. I don't know. I cannot-- I'm not deep enough. I don't have such an answer.

I would take the studying, and take the psychological study-- I don't have that, I cannot give you an answer, to be honest with you. I will not be hasty in condemning them. I will not be condoning it. I really can't [INAUDIBLE].

What about when you were there? As a kid, you were a kid?

That's right, to me, personally, they were not-- I did not experience anything bad. They tried to do their job, and their job was an unenviable one, to be sure. I don't think they sought about-- I think they were sought out by the SS. I don't know what I would do. I mean, if somebody comes and says, do-- you're reluctant. You are making a kapo out of you.

They have a choice of rejecting.

And if they had rejected?

I think that would have stood a very, very little chance of-- you don't reject the SS, please.

You don't.

Of course not. For lesser rejections, not recommend rejection. People are not here today.

I don't know, I don't know. I feel sorry for them. I feel truly bad for them. I'm sure they have to live with lot of feelings that they wouldn't ordinarily have to live with. My heart goes out to them, that's all I can say.

If they have children today, if they had to-- unwillingly had to whip somebody because the SS commanded them to do

so, I feel truly sad for them. Not sad that they did it, I mean, sad, of course, that they had to do it. But I'm sure they find peace, they can't. How can you?

Are there people here at the conference that were--

I have no idea. I have no idea.

Have you ever met anybody who identified themselves that way?

No, I don't think they would be too anxious. I would like to speak to one of them-- not in condemnation, just to see how they live with themselves today, how they feel. And what their lives are like. I know what mine is like, just having observed and witnessed, having been to some degree a participant must put an additional burden [INAUDIBLE].

And I just-- I'm really grateful that it's not accessible. Maybe it's years later, but I really find a lot of compassion for them. Because I can't imagine anybody deliberately, or voluntarily actually volunteering for it. I don't know how it went. I was fortunate enough not to have been in the place of setting, where this was done. Meaning, selecting the kapos and the blockalteste and Stubendienst and all that.

And we had to-- and there was one, as we arrived, again, I could feel the pain in her heart, that she [? fainted ?] with us. Because chaos broke out. This was 1,500 people, 15 people on one bunk, only like sardines, literally. If one wanted to turn over, everybody had to turn over, because we could only lie sideways against each other.

And finally, somebody let go, and gave way and shrieks. And it caught on, and everybody followed. And the blockalteste came out, and she said, pleadingly, please control yourselves. I know how it is. I have been here since 1942. I build this place, she says.

But don't think you mean anything to the SS. One cannon in the whole block is gone. So in other words, we were naive enough to cry out and tell them we're uncomfortable, you know. And she was actually pleading to calm us down.

And she finally-- and the only way she could achieve this is by actually being firm. She says, I don't like to say that, but I'm going to. And this is when she came up, she says, you think a life means anything here? It doesn't. And she gave all she had.

And finally, everybody quieted down, and we soon came zahlappell, which was about 3:00 in the morning. And this was a cold, and all, we immediately knew what she was talking about. And that's when we understood. And I understand today what she was up against. And I cannot speak for her, and those who served in our camp.

Did the camp experience bring on ugliness in you, that to this day, you find--

Oh, it did-- well, I mean, for my own personal self, I'm trying to see what I-- no. I did see ugliness in people, but I don't know if it had been there, or it was just something that was precipitated. Because you never know what hunger will do to you. You never know what pain will do to you, fear, anxiety.

I mean, actually losing your mind, you didn't know if you-- it was hard. It's very hard to suddenly find yourself judging somebody, what makes them-- I mean, I have a headache, I couldn't possibly be interested in anything else but [INAUDIBLE]. And if it gets to the point where I'm that uncomfortable, I'll take anything just so it relieves me.

And I'll be amazed that later on, I say, was I really that ornery? Was I really-- so it's hard to say. If people were different--

You had compassion for yourself?

Compassion for myself? Well, I think everybody should have compassion for themselves, I really think it's very important. I think you have to understand yourself-- you mustn't be too hard on yourself. Because I am not saying, one should

excuse-- that's an open ticket to do as you please. Of course not. I'm not saying that at all.

But it did bring out things in people that I would say-- and perhaps others have seen it in me that it brought out. Yeah, well, politeness, let's say. Or either you withdrew, or you became extremely aggressive. When the time came to stand in line, because you were exploding, well, I have to express myself--

I mean, there were no bathrooms. There were buckets, and you took turns. And when that flew over them-- and it was gone, and your turn came and there was no room for you, it was an experience that you can't possibly retain your dignity at. And so those are extenuating circumstances, and you don't know.

I don't know what I would do right this minute if anybody came and attacked me in some way, you know. But for the most part, I did not see bad in people.

Did you feel any compassion, or perhaps that's the wrong word-- did you ever look at those SS people and think to yourself--

They're there to do their job? No.

And that anyone is capable of that? Or did you think as a breed apart?

Everyone in there was capable of it. And everyone took his own liberties. For instance, there, nobody gave a command to this one young SS as they were counting us. And this one lady moved-- that's all she did, she moved. And he came at her with his boots and started kicking her.

I mean, Hitler, per se, did not have to do this. See, it had to be within him-- the ability, the desire.

Did you ever say--

And to the point-- that not just one. In the morning, she became-- it's very important, it's very interesting, because I will never know other than either to spite him, or she actually had lost her mind-- he kept kicking her in the morning, kicked her. She would go into laughter. And the more he kicked her, the louder she laughed. And ran around in circles, and he followed her until she could not stand up anymore.

And that, to me, that picture is often repeated in my mind. And I will never know, and I really would like to know, was she that heroic, or had she lost her mind? And that's a very little girl, and she probably served us in a big way, because we no longer took it lightly when the SS came, which is what was a matter of being subjected to the same thing. I don't know, which is right, which is wrong. I'm here to tell you about it. She isn't--

Did you ever feel that anybody--

And I'm saying it--

--capable in the way those SS behaved? Or did you somehow--

Anyone, you mean, in Germany?

Anyone in the world.

Anyone?

Is somehow capable of it, or were they a breed apart in your thinking?

No, no, I don't think they are a breed apart. No, I don't really think they are a breed apart. Because we had wonderful-- I mean, very eager participants. Very eager participants in Poland, in Ukraine, and Hungary, whatever occupation came.

For instance, why do you think Hungary-- parts of Czechoslovakia and certain parts of Europe were occupied by Hungary?

I mean, Hitler started giving them back to Hungary-- not out of the generosity. They were their allies, and they could rely on them to do their job. They had no problems in any country, in any country, including France, to find participants, collaborators. So no, they're not a breed apart.

Is that the human condition? Are we all capable of these things? Or is it only certain people?

No, I think we're-- [INAUDIBLE] I would hope not, and I think there is anger in all of us against what [INAUDIBLE]. It's an emotion. And it's an important emotion, I think. Violence is not [? important. ?] Violence is something I would work against.

[INAUDIBLE]

Thank you for the interview.