Interview with Kay Bonner Nee
By Rhoda G. Lewin
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HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY TAPING PROJECT

Q: First, I want to read the speech I use when I am asked to speak. When I was first asked by the Jewish community of the Twin Cities in 1982 to speak at a special service, "Holocaust Day" which memorialized the martyrdom of the six million Jews who perished in Nazi concentration camps, I was both honored and humbled, because I was asked to speak as one who was a liberator of the death and concentration camps. I had never thought of myself as a liberator. I did not carry a gun or fire a shot. And I said that I had been there at the time; that I had witnessed; but that I had not actually, in my mind, liberated. I was assured that as a witness, if I could remember what I saw, I would qualify. I do remember. I could never forget what I saw. The memory has been seared in my mind. I may have forgotten some of the details -- those too painful to remember -- but to the best of my ability I will try again to reconstruct the camp for you as it was when I was there. Before we take that journey together, you may be interested in a few words of background as to why I was there in the first place. I was in Europe during World War II as a field entertainer. I was a civilian but I was attached to the Fifth Corps of the First Army Special Service Division. Another woman and I drove a two-ton truck that was equipped with a side that let down to make a stage. We carried a small piano and a microphone so when we let down the side of the truck and pushed out the piano we were ready to go. It was quite literally a case of "Have Truck Will Travel." After working in England for some months, we moved in after D-Day to the continent and launched from Utah Beach, the first, to my knowledge, the first American women to arrive. Our assignment was to go into the field and entertain where USO troops and other entertainment units could <u>not</u> go. They needed stages and all sorts of equipment. We needed nothing but our truck to make a theater out of a field or a woods. We performed many times while the soldiers watched us from their foxholes and the V-1 rockets buzzed overhead. The buzzing sound was something you always listened for, because as long as the sound continued. The rocket was still in the air. When it stopped, it meant the rocket was going to land and you'd better head for cover -- <u>fast</u>. We moved as the Fifth Corps moved and we were present for the liberation of Paris. As a matter of fact, we were there before the official liberation when the Germans

were still making an attempt to defend the city. Unfortunately the uniforms we wore were grey-blue in color, and our hats, by some mistake, unknown to me, were shaped somewhat like German officers' hats. I remember riding through Paris one dark night, and of course there were never lights after dark, nor were there any street signs, so you never knew where you were, and it became obvious that the jeep I was riding in was being fired at. The driver was wise enough to know that it could be my cap that was being mistaken for a German's in the dark, so I took it off and sat on it for the rest of our journey to our destination. Three days later the famous liberation day parade, led by General Eisenhower, took place. I'm sure many of you have seen pictures of that. I was in the cheering crowd that lined the Champs Elysees as the victorious American troops marched from the Arc d'Triomphe, truly a sight to remember.

When we left Paris we went on through France and into Belgium. Just before the Battle of the Bulge, we were called back from the field to Eupen, Belgium, to organize a Christmas show that would be produced in a theater there. Eupen was now being used as a rest center. We were only five miles from Monceau, where the breakthrough occurred. For four days we stayed while the city was fired on and the streets were strafed, and the German parachutists landed and were disguised and hidden in the town. Eupen was only eighteen miles from Aachen and therefore had many German sympathizers. Finally we were ordered to leave and we left in the dark of the night with the tracer bullets that filled the sky the only light we had to see by. During the exodus, the girl with me was killed. I'll always remember Katie Cullen as one of the unsung heroes of the war. You won't find her name among the history books, I'm sure, but she was a person who really gave of herself all the way. After the Bulge we moved back to Eupen and continued to organize shows at the theater using French as well as American talent. When the First Army moved into Germany I went with them and I was with them when they came to Buchenwald.

I was not with the first wave of troops that actually liberated the camp. But I was with the second group that entered. The Germans were gone, although some were still being flushed out of hiding. Most of the Germans had left before the liberation, fleeing when they knew that the Americans would be there. In the days before, they had killed as many prisoners as they could. Their goal had been to eliminate all the prisoners by whatever means they could, and burn their remains, so when the Americans arrived there would be an empty camp. But there was not enough time, and there were too many prisoners. They did not accomplish it. They left behind many of the dead, the near-dead and the half-living. And while the greatest number of prisoners at Buchenwald were Jewish, one must remember, too, that the camp also contained a number of political prisoners of other races. Even some Germans who had dared to speak out against what was happening in their country. As I entered the camp I was overcome with the horrible stench. The combination of still-burning flesh and hair, the decayed bodies, and the unsanitary condition of the place was overpowering. I remember thinking, "They can take photographs, they can write stories about Buchenwald,

but it will be impossible to describe the terrible odor." And indeed it was indescribable.

Now I'll try to take you through the camp as I went through it. The office of the commander was near the entrance. Outside were contraptions on which they hung prisoners by first tying their hands behind their backs, and then attaching rope to the hands and pulling them backwards and upwards to hang from the posts. A prisoner did not have to hang very long before the arms were detached from their sockets. It was a torturous device. Inside the camp office the furnishings were lavish but garish. It was here that the wife of the commander, known as the "bitch of Buchenwald" displayed her lampshades made from the human skin of the prisoners. And lest you not believe they were human skin, she had left the tattooed concentration camp numbers on the skin that made the shades. At the right of the camp as you entered were the crematoriums. The ovens were still smoking. In their frantic efforts to destroy the evidence the Germans had kept the ovens going for twenty- four hours a day without stop. Half-burned bodies were still in the ovens where they had been left as the Germans fled. Beside the ovens were the emaciated bodies of prisoners they had not had time to burn. They were naked, stacked like cordwood as you would your fireplace wood. Further down were slat-sided carts that were also filled with bodies. These carts were used to bring the bodies from the gas chambers. There had not been time to unload them. I remember thinking, " No one will believe this. I must take pictures." But my hands, my whole body, was shaking so that I dropped the camera and jammed the shutter, so I took no pictures. But the picture of the reality will remain in my mind forever. These emaciated skeletal figures were real people, human beings I was viewing. They were not plaster, nor even animals. They had all lived, and breathed, and talked, and loved, as is the right of every human. To end in the ovens, stacked as cordwood on the ground, or piled in a cart, seemed the most inhuman of ends to a human life. As indeed it was. Not far from the ovens was a cement torture chamber. The man who took me through it had been a prisoner. He could speak some English and could still walk. He said they brought prisoners to be punished into this structure. The walls were three feet thick to muffle the screams. There was a drain in the middle of the cement floor so they could use hoses with hard streams of water to wash away the blood from those beatings. On the walls were great meat hooks where they literally hung prisoners like chunks of beef until they died. The prisoner who was pointing out these instruments of torture told me that his wife and two sons had died on the hooks. Further down from the torture chamber -- to the left as you faced it -- were the beginnings of the barracks. These were wood structures, unheated with few windows. The wood bunk beds with no mattresses reached to the ceiling. In winter many froze in these flimsy structures, froze in their bunks and remained there until there was room at the crematorium. The people in these first barracks were still alive, but dressed in their torn and dirty striped camp clothes, and they were ill and hungry. In the last barracks was, to me, the saddest condition of all. These contained the living dead, the people so ill, so emaciated, that they were more dead than alive. Some were conscious enough to know that

liberation had come. I remember one old man -- he may not have been old, it was impossible to tell in their condition whether they were young or old -- grabbed hold of my trench coat and held on as best he could. "American," he said, "American, gut." And then the good American, out of ignorance did the worst thing she could have under the circumstances. I gave him all the food I had. And the food consisted of chocolate bars and cheese and whatever else contained in the K-ration, which we all carried. It was concentrated food, richer by far than regular food, of which we had none. It did not occur to me, and I excuse my ignorance because I was young, had no experience, had no training in medicine, that the rich food would be impossible for people who had been half-starved for so long to digest. When the medics came later they fed them gruel made of a mixture of dried potatoes and water and powdered milk. Many of these living dead did die. I have always feared that I contributed to some of the deaths by my foolish action. The medics tried to comfort me by saying, "You didn't know. Most of them would have died anyway. You did what you thought was right." And that may be true. But at timed it still haunts me. I looked into the eyes of death in these people and I did what I could. I hugged them, and kissed them, and cried with them, and murmured to them in a language that most did not understand. And I watched a number of them die while I was there, one whose hand turned stiff in mine as I held it. And I wondered about these people. What had their lives been like before Buchenwald? What their lives had been after their arrival at the camp was only too clear. And even then I could only guess at some of the atrocities that had been committed. These living dead will live with me forever.

The next day at Buchenwald, we began a series of visitations for the townspeople. We brought them out to the concentration camp in groups and showed them through the camp. "You did this," we told them. "Look at the remains of what you did." And the people answered, " No, no, not us. It was Hitler."

"You allowed it to happen," we said, "You are responsible." "No, no." they said. "We did not even know the camp was here.' The prisoners said this was a lie, that they had been taken in work gangs to the town to fix the roads and repair buildings. They said that many villagers had taunted them and thrown stones. How could they not know the camp was there? How could they not, I wondered, at least smell it? But these visitations had a deep effect on me. When I returned to the United States, I remembered it. If, I thought, we held the German citizens responsible for what their government did, then surely I am also responsible in some way for my own government. I had not been politically aware or even aware before the war, but I became so afterwards. And whenever I become tired or feel that one person cannot do very much or that what I'm doing is not that important or not having any effect, I remember the Germans saying, " No, no, we are not responsible.' And our answer, "Yes, yes you are. You allowed it to happen." And I keep on trying.

Never, I pray, will anyone say to us, to you, and to me, " You are responsible. You let it happen." I would hope we could at least reply in good conscience, "But I tried. I did my best to keep it from happening."

Buchenwald was liberated in 1945. It was not until 1982 that I first spoke publicly of my experience. Had I forgotten? No. It was more that I, the people like me, and survivors of the death camps, were not only discouraged to speak, we were asked to be silent. "It's all past now," we were told. "Do not dwell on the past. We want to forget all that. Do not remind us." And so we were silent. And now some say that the Holocaust was fiction, that it never really happened. So now we have been unsilenced and we speak because of course we never did, or could never forget. And while I feel that the living can never speak adequately for the dead, I agree with the Memorial Council that for the dead and the living, we must bear witness. To remember Buchenwald is not easy. It is a difficult journey. But it must be remembered. We must take the journey again and again. How could there have ever been a Buchenwald? Or a Dachau? Or an Auschwitz? Or any of the other concentration camps? How could they possibly have come to pass? We may never know all the answers. But this we must resolve, this we must profess: that it must not be allowed to happen again.

Q: Thank you. As you were talking, I can see why you are asked to speak. I did come up with a question or two I wanted to ask. How long were you in Buchenwald?

A: In the actual camp, I was there for over a week, and then after that I tried to help with the reconciliation of the people who were there. You see, now we had liberated them, and we had no plans at all for what to do with them. And very few people knew if their relatives were still alive, if they were, where they were, they didn't know where to go or what to do and so for some of them it was a matter of, you know, putting them from one camp into another, except that the second camp was a friendly camp and we had food for them. But later, one of the saddest things that I used to encounter on the road would be these people from the concentration camps carrying little "band-aids " of things over their shoulders, their few little belongings, little knapsacks, or maybe some of them had found some sort of a two-wheeled cart that they could push along. And the roads would be lined with them. And the thing that you could almost not stand if you thought about it was, they don't know where they're going. They don't know where to go. We liberated them, and where have we sent them? And I think part of it was that we are so really critical of people now who don't believe that these camps existed, but you know, we were over there and we had heard about the camps, but none of us realized how horrible they were. We just were not prepared to believe that. And so when we entered the camps, and saw what it was really like, it was almost more than we could handle. It was so devastating. And then trying to find other places for them afterwards -- I mean, many of them were liberated and it still became the end of the lives because they had no place to go and they went back to a country that had been blown away, to homes that no longer existed, to

relatives that they didn't know where they were, and tried to pick up their lives again. I think the thing that helped was that anybody who was strong enough in spirit -- and it took strength of spirit as well as body to survive that -- was not completely done in when they were let out, they had then some hope. But the sign across the entrance was, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.' And now at least again they had some hope. I have never made a study to see just how many people were reunited, how many died on the way, and so forth. I suppose, at least for those who -- and there were so many who died while I was still in the camp -- at least they knew that help had come in some form or another.

Q: Now you came in with special services. This was a U.S. Army operation where they set up some sort of command to supervise the clean up of the camp, the care of the prisoners?

A: The First Army came in and did that, and they did what they could. They brought in the medics, and they tried to arrange for transportation, and they tried to do what they could, but the war was still going on. Granted it was coming to an end, but it was still going on, and the great confusion of what to do with these people, you know. Nobody was prepared. And so, under the circumstances I suppose what was done was the best that could possibly be done. It was just one of those unbelievable situations. I mean, if you had sat down and thought, " What are these camps really like?" You wouldn't have come halfway to what the reality was.

Q: One of the things that surprised me, very early on you said you went in on Utah Beach. After the first waves of troops went in?

A: We went in -- I'm trying to recall how many days after, it was D-Day plus -- I thought I would never forget that but everything ran together then -- but I think we were probably D-Day plus 22 or 25, or something like that, which was still very early.

Q: How many of you were women? Was your group predominantly women? The Special Services?

A: Well they had the women who served the coffee and doughnuts and they had the women who were members of the USO shows. They were always really quite far behind the lines.

Q: These were entertainers who just went over to do the shows.

A: Yeah. And they usually got out in a hurry. During the Bulge, Marlene Dietrich was with us, but she left long before. (Laughs)

Q: Now, as Special Services, you had enlisted, you were paid a salary.

A: A civilian salary, yes. We had gone over originally attached to the Red Cross. And when we got there, it was discovered that really wasn't what was needed. They were desperately in need of field entertainers. And so those of us who had talent of some kind, who could sing, dance, do funny sayings, whatever, you know, and could also learn how to drive a two-ton truck, were transferred to that. And that's what we did.

Q: So you'd gone over to do Red Cross work.

A: Yes. We had also a movie projector with us and were referred to sometimes as the "cinemobiles," but we found too, that they were not interested in seeing movies, and the darn thing was always breaking down anyway. They were more interested in seeing live entertainment. And so, the girl I was with played the piano marvelously, and in those days I sang and danced, and then we would get the boys in from the audience who could sing, and we would pick up some that were really very talented -- like Jimmy McPartland who was over there -- he plays the most beautiful trumpet in the world -- and then once in a while we would hook up with some of the others, Dinah Shore, for instance, who was a marvelous person, who of all the big shots was the one who came closest to the front lines. I thought she really did a good job. And then there was Edgar G. Robinson and Sam Levine and all the others who'd show up from time to time. And Kostelanetz, Lily Pons, but they were usually much further back than we were, because with just a truck we could go right up into the fields, right into the front lines, and hide under the truck when the flak was falling. It was performing a service that wouldn't have been served otherwise.

Q: Then you stayed in Buchenwald for this week.

A: Yeah. I believe it was about a week and a half, and then I went back once afterwards to check on what was happening with the survivors, to see how many had been able to get out, and if there was anything more we could do.

Q: Did you move on then with the army because the army was moving on?

A: Yeah. The Fifth Corps was moving on and I was attached to them.

Q: Do you know whether they left some sort of supervisory group back there at the camp? Because I had heard that in, what now seems to be an absolutely incredible move, they actually put German civilians in charge of some of those refugee establishments and DP camps, and former German policemen and soldiers. Nothing like that happened?

A: I'm not aware of that. I'm very much aware of our bringing them through and showing them the camp. And saying, " We want you to see what you did here." And their denial that they even knew the camp was there.

Q: You didn't involve any German civilians.

A: Not that I have knowledge of, but there may very well have been. I know there was lots of stuff going on, and it was a big place.

Q: And then you said towards the end of your talk that you were asked to be silent, in the years after the war. Was that a personal, "I was asked," or are you talking about the whole group of Holocaust survivors?

A: The whole group of Holocaust survivors were mostly asked to be silent. Many of them that did find homes, and if there were small children in the homes, I know in one instance in particular, in which the woman was told -- I believe it was her uncle -- and there were two small girls in the home, and he said, "Now I don't want you scaring those girls with any of those horror stories of the Holocaust. I don't want to hear any of those stories. It's all over now. You forget it." And nobody listened. I found that those of us who came back to the United States, like myself, if I wanted to talk, or bring up the Holocaust, people changed the subject in a big hurry. They really did not want to hear.

Q: That must have been so difficult for you, because you were a media person and you had this story to tell.

A: Yeah, and people did say to me, "You know, that's all over, Kay, why don't you forget it?' People didn't want to face up to the fact, I think, that that had really happened, and they didn't want to be reminded. And I think it isn't until recently when books, and stories, and people are saying, "Oh, that never really happened, they made that all up," that groups began to think, that <u>this</u> cannot be allowed to happen. No matter how much it may hurt people, they've got to know what really did happen.

Q: Have you had any contact since you left Buchenwald with any of the people there? Or with anybody in Germany? Were there any acquaintances made that lasted? Did you ever hear from any of the people you had been with, or served with, or people who had been prisoners in Buchenwald?

A: No, as a matter of fact, I never did. The only ones that I met was when I talked in 1982 at Mt, Zion and there were some Buchenwald survivors in the audience who came up to me afterwards and said, " You told it just like it was. We were there. We know." But I never did. You know, It was just like -- like -- another world. It wasn't like a summer camp where you exchange your names and continue a correspondence. It was a different sort of thing.

Q: You were telling me about some of the prisoners there -- some of the political prisoners, and some who were captured soldiers from Belgium?

A: Yes. I think it's important for people to know that the Holocaust was more than just a Jewish issue, that there were many other people that also suffered. I can remember in Buchenwald -- and Buchenwald seemed to be the camp where most of the political prisoners ended up, more so than the other camps --– and one of the people I ran into there was from Chicago, for instance, an American who had come over and was incarcerated in one of those camps. And one of the most touching sights that I witnessed was a man who had been a Belgian general. His friends had come to the camp when it was liberated, and they brought his old uniform along and they put it on him, and of course it just hung because there was nothing left of him but skin and bones, but they were marching him along, holding him up by his arms on each side, and tears of happiness were just streaming down his face, and you could see by looking at this old man -- as I say, it's hard to tell whether they were old or young there, because they were all in such extremely bad condition -- but you knew he was not going to survive, and the thing that at least brought some gladness to your heart was that you knew he was going to die in his uniform. And as far as anybody who had survived what he had survived could die happily, that was going to happen to him. And that was one little bright spot in all of this.

Q: So then there were people there of all nationalities.

A: Yes, and there were a number of Germans too. Germans who had dared to speak out against what was happening, and against Hitler. They ended up in the concentration camps. And there were Polish and there were Belgians and there were French and there were a few Russians. So it was not a completely Jewish camp. The population in Buchenwald was probably more mixed than in many of the other camps. It was not long after that that the Russian-American hook-up took place, and I remember that very vividly because I was the only woman present at that. I happened to be -- if you may remember the story -- the lieutenant got a little eager, one of the lieutenants -- they were not supposed to have the official German link-up until the next day, but this lieutenant got a little eager and somehow ran into them in the woods -- "accidentally" is the story -- and I happened to be seeing a movie at the general's compound when the phone message came in that this lieutenant had hooked up and he was not really happy and quite eager to keep this quiet, but the movie stopped right then and the general went out and then the next day was the official link-up of the Russians and the Americans. And that was a celebration to behold. I mean, the Russians, which I would not have suspected, were very demonstrative people. There was much hugging and kissing and celebrating and great shows of happiness and so forth, so it was really something to witness. And that, of course, was very near the end of the whole thing as far as the Germans were concerned. But it was a very exciting memory. And I would rather remember that than Buchenwald. But we must talk about it. I'm convinced, and that's why I'm always willing. When anybody asks me, I will go out. Although it's difficult for me to relive it every time. I think it's important and I think that our children growing up who were too young to know anything about that must know that this was real, that this is not

just something of somebody's imagination or something that was written up. It happened. And they must know that it happened. And they must know what a terrible thing it was. If they don't, how can they be instruments of peace? How can they truly help us to see that it never happens again? I thought, "Oh my God, I haven't thought about this for so long."

Q: This was in '82 when you were asked to speak at Mt. Zion Holocaust Memorial.

A: At Mt. Zion Holocaust Memorial, and I thought, "I've blocked this out of my mind now for so long, will I remember?" But you know it was a matter of just unlocking the door and it all came out. And it was all there. And I could see the camp. Smell it, and I could go step by step through the whole thing. And it was kind of a brutal thing, very difficult for me to do, but once I got through that and when I got the reaction from the people saying -- especially those from the camps -- who came to me, who said, "You know, you told it just as it was," then I knew I'd remembered it correctly. And saying, " You must tell this again and again, you must. People have to know.

Q: How many times have you spoken, do you know?

A: No, I haven't really kept track. I've spoken at a number of churches and I've spoken at a number of schools, fortunately, and a number of colleges. And I haven't spoken just recently -- well I shouldn't say that, I've spoken quite a bit for Norm Sherman at different places.

Q: This is for the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.

A: To raise money for the Memorial. So I still do, and it's the one thing I will go out of my way to do and the one thing that I don't take money for. Because I feel this is my obligation. It's more than my obligation. Its -- you know -- I'm just required to do this. And if I don't, then how can I expect anybody else to do it? And I think maybe the more <u>I</u> do it maybe the more people we can find who can also tell their stories and go around to speak. And I think when they see a live human being speaking to them and saying, "I was there," I mean, how can anyone then deny it. I think there is a great percentage of belief. There may still be some who say, "Neh, neh, neh, she tells a good story.' But I think for the most part they really believe me, because I don't exaggerate; in fact, I sometimes wonder if I go far enough on the horrors of what it really was.

Q: Now this was spring when you came in. But we're talking about this vast area, this camp where it was just bare dirt, and when it rained it was mud, and you must have had had to bring in exterminators, or something; there was lice.

A: Oh it was full of lice, everybody had lice, and body sores, and of course <u>extreme</u> malnutrition. As I say, the people in this last barracks, they couldn't even lift their heads, really. I mean they were the living dead.

Q: Did you see any of what they called Mussulmen? These were people who were like walking zombies; they had been so starved and so mistreated that their minds had just retreated.

A: Oh, yes, there were some of those. Those again to me were the living dead.

Q: I wondered if that was what you meant when you said, "the living dead."

A: You could say they were alive because they were still breathing, but for all practical purposes they were dead. To me it was a terrible shock and something so repulsive that you could hardly bear it, to see these piles of dead bodies -- but then when I met these living dead, I thought, " Well, at least the others are out of it, they are dead. These poor souls are still suffering." And that was a hard, hard thing to bear. And if they survived at all, and most of them did not, there was really no life left for them. And there was nobody to care for them and they couldn't even begin to remember where they came from, if you could get them back

Q: What kind of background did you come out of? Where did you grow up?

A: Well, I was born in northern Minnesota on a farm outside of Plummer.

Q: Near what?

A: That's what most people say. (Laughter) Although Norman Sherman came back one time, way back when Ben Luchterman was running for congress, and I said, " Norman, where've you been?' And he said, " I have been to a place where nobody else in the world has ever been or has ever heard of." And I said, "Where's that?" He said, "Plummer, Minnesota." And I said, " And that's where I was born." And he said, "Surely you jest. Nobody was born there.' But I was born on a small farm outside of Plummer and then we moved to Minneapolis when I was quite small. And I've lived most of my life in Minnesota. I have lived in New York and Chicago and a few other places, but Minnesota is my home.

Q: Were you in school when the war started?

A: I was just out of school. I suppose my parents worried about me, but they tried not to let me know they worried about me. (Laughs)

Q: How did you sign up for the Red Cross? I think that's a little known epic. You know, men were drafted or they enlisted, but this was before the WACS, before the Women's Army Corps was established.

A: No, that was established. Because I went in in 1943 and I went immediately overseas and then had barely arrived in London when the call came out -- the desperate need for entertainers to go where other people couldn't. And the girls that I had come over with, we had entertained on shipboard, one another, so they immediately said, "Oh, Kay, Kay, Kay, send her over there." So I applied and that's when I got transferred to the Special Services Division and that's where I stayed. I do have the Bronze Star.

Q: For what did you receive the Bronze Star?

A: For services to front-line troops. And I wouldn't even mention that except that very few women ever received it, and almost no civilian women.

Q: What kind of award ceremony was it?

A: Well it wasn't really an award ceremony of any kind because at the time it was awarded the war was all over in Europe and I had gone to Paris on leave, and I was hit by a French taxi cab (laughs) and my leg was broken and I ended up in the American hospital and stayed for some time and then it was discovered at that time that there was not enough calcium in Europe for bones to heal properly. So then I was sent home and it was sent to me.

Q: I see the citation and the Bronze Star.

A: It was sort of an unbelievable part of my life. I think it <u>did</u> change my life a great deal. I was not even from a middle-class family -- we were bordering on poverty --and so your ambitions are to get rich and have a lot of money and have a lot of fun. But once I had gone through that experience it changed my whole attitude as to what my values really became.

Q: Well, for most of us in the 1930s, there wasn't a lot of money.

A: No, that's very true. (Laughs)

Q: And when you said you were just out of school, did you mean you were out of high school or out of the university?

A: I was just out of the college of St. Catherine, as a matter of fact.

It was something that should never, never, never in this world ever happen, but I guess way down in the depths of my soul, as long as it did happen, I feel that in a way it was an advantage that I could be a part of it. An advantage for me, because not only was I able to help, but I think it did a lot to make me grow up, and to change my values about what was really important, and to become active and responsible and not to expect other people were going to take care of it. You know, that's what happened a great deal with the Germans, somebody else would

take care of it. I mean, even the intellectuals really dropped the ball over there because they didn't think this would ever happen.

Q: There are a lot of Germans in Minnesota. Your family were not Germans.

A: I'm Irish and French. As a matter of fact, there may be somewhere back in my ancestry some German, you know they all got mixed up over there. (Laughs)

Q: I do appreciate your being willing to talk about this.

A: And let me make it clear. I'm not condemning the German race. You know, it's something that could have happened -- I can't believe that we ever would have had these concentration camps -- but I think that what happened to the Germans, the way they let Hitler take over, is a lesson that everybody in the world learned from, that you can't allow this to happen. And the frenzy which he could whip people into --they were just about going to follow him through anything -- a very unnatural sort of thing, and I don't think the so-called knowledgeable Germans ever believed this should happen or could happen. They couldn't believe it could happen. Now we all know it can happen and that it's up to us to see that it doesn't happen.