

This is Marsha French. Today's date is September 19, 1984, interviewing Carl Knuemann at the Faith in Humankind Conference in Washington, DC. If we could start, what is your complete name, please?

My name is Carl, C-a-r-l, H. Heinz. My last name is K-N-U-E-M-A-N-N.

When and where were you born?

I was born in Poland, the town Bydgoszcz, B-Y-D-G-O-S-C-S.

I know that you come to us today with a story that you would like to have told at the conference.

Yes.

Can you begin?

I would like to refer to two people. First, the director of The Pharmaceutical Institute of the Berlin University in Berlin, who was director [? from ?] about '31 or so until, really, '48. He survived the war, and so forth. His name was Wolfgang Heubner, Dr. Wolfgang Heubner. Last name is H-E-U-B-E-R-- B-N-E-R.

I would like also to refer to his wife. She was an anti-Nazi firebrand. She was a relative of Martin Luther, even.

So anyhow, the incident I want to mention here is that Heubner was known, from the very start, being an anti-Nazi. His medical colleagues, of course, were all more or less Jewish, you know.

He was a friend of Einstein. Einstein played the fiddle. They had a quartet consisting of Heubner and Einstein and two other, Dr. Euler and one other famous professor at Berlin, also of the Jewish faith.

What was your relationship to him?

Actually, the Heubners, my sister went to school with one of the daughters of Huebners, due to birthday party. So my parents became quite acquainted with Professor Huebner and his wife. We were guests there.

As soon as they discovered that we didn't like Hitler, or we are anti-Nazis, then we were part and parcel of their of their whole set up there.

How old were you at this time?

At this time, 11 years old.

What year was this?

That was 1934 or end of '33.

And where?

In Berlin.

So due to this rather intimate relationship, many Jewish people were referred, actually, to our home address. I was born in Poland. We were kicked out of Poland in 1932 because my father was of German descent and born in Germany and held a German passport. Because he had been honorary consul for the Weimar Republic in Bydgoszcz, in my hometown.

But we had a small factory in Bydgoszcz, in bakery machinery, and the Poles during the economic depression felt that

foreigners shouldn't do business in Poland. So our temporary visa status was lifted. We had no other place to go but Germany, because that's what my father's passport was. This was exactly November '32. So we just arrived about six, eight weeks before Hitler took power.

You settled in Berlin?

We settled in Berlin because, during the Depression in Germany, it was very hard to get housing even. Everything was rent-controlled. Coming in from a foreign country, just didn't work as easily. Berlin, we had some connections, and so on. That's how we got to Berlin.

Besides, my father was a veteran. He had actually abdicated his right for a veteran's pension. But due to the transfer of our home, and losing his property, and so forth, he had TB. His TB became very prominent. He had to be operated on, and Berlin seemed to be the best place for this. We knew some medical doctors, and so on.

Anyhow, but this story should be really dedicated to Wolfgang Heubner. His one daughter had married to America. She had married a physician in Ohio. The schoolmate of my sister, Heidi Heubner--

[CRYING]

--they wanted to bring out to America in order not to be subjected to this Nazi regime. So actually, they wanted to do this, but it finally came about in '36 or '37.

But what's so spectacular about Huebner is that he was sort of the Vice President of the International Pharmaceutical Congress in '35 in Paris. He had a prepared paper to deliver. First, he was told to quit the assembly by letter, which he didn't do. It seems to be a small thing. But it was a big thing, of course, for an official.

Next thing he departed from the prepared text and announced publicly from the rostrum. He said something, like, I feel urged to inform my colleagues that the papers I'm receiving as a pharmacologist indicate that the tests for drugs, for new drugs, seem to be conducted on living human beings. Because the test reports which he ex-officio had to read, it was like the federal drug agency to approve medication. It all indicated that this was done on living human beings.

Of course, the audience was stunned by this announcement. But the remarkable thing is that nobody even asked him a question afterwards. That this whole pharmacological society was just sitting there taking this and not a word of protest or not even a word of contact with Heubner.

Did he elaborate any?

He elaborated. But apparently, everybody felt unpleasant about this. Do you

Know where his report was from?

What?

Do you know where he got his report from?

Oh, no. See, his Institute was sort of acting as a clearinghouse to approve all medications in Germany. So ex-officio, every report made on medications had to come him all over Germany. These reports were delivered to, probably, a great number of universities. But his Institute acted as a clearinghouse.

What year was this?

That was 1935. I think summer 1935.

At what university?

No, no. His statement was made at the International Pharmaceutical Congress in Paris. But his Institute at Berlin University had the duty to examine all test reports on medications approved for distribution in Germany. This statement was made by him.

Of course, you know, the Nazi officials who were also present, they were shocked by this. Somehow, somewhere, somebody decided, actually, Heubner himself expected to be arrested when he returned to Germany. But he wasn't because his announcement apparently was received completely with lethargy.

The Nazis found it better not to make waves, just let him go on. Because he was famous, so famous that they found it better to have him on their side-- or not on their side, but having him installed in this position and leave him alone. Only thing happened that they actually took the administration from him of that Institute, and they appointed a Dr. Druckerei as an administrative head.

By the way, Dr. Druckerei is still living in West Germany. He produces a freckles treatment, a wax which removes freckles, that kind of parapharmacologist he is. This man appeared in uniform in the Institute, intimidated all professors serving in this Institute, and especially, of course, Heubner.

But his appointment was triggered by Heubner's statement. And Druckerei was put, administratively at least, over Heubner. So budget and all that had to be approved by this super Nazi.

Then, as time went on, Huebner's assistant was a Dr. Levy. I think it was 1937. I think American pharmacologists realized what-- I mean, there were visitors from America on and off. They realized that Druckerei was sort of shadowing Huebner. I mean, this Nazi was shadowing Huebner.

They somehow arranged an invitation, I think, for Huebner to University of Minnesota. Huebner's assistant, Levy, a Jewish man, felt that-- and Huebner actually was also contacted by the SS and saw that they made preparation to probably arrest Levy and do away with him. Huebner, realizing this, went to Levy and said my dear friend, I think this is the time. You have to get out.

[CRYING]

I have an invitation to go to America. At this time, both daughters were already living here. Heubner said to him, I think you take the place which was offered to me. I stay here. You see, they make it difficult, but they don't kill me. But in your case, they will kill you.

He was Jewish?

Who? Levy, yeah. So this was definitely an act of, I mean, professional and human and in any way-- you know, of course, I was a kid. I was about 14 years old. Only thing is that, of course, you--

For me, I mean, I came to Germany in '32. It didn't take me, as a kid, more than two minutes to find out that this whole society was lying to each other. That there were people disappearing. As a child, of course, you notice. I mean, you have nothing else to do but go to school and keep your eyes open.

I had it very easy, or very, very simple. They just didn't like me in Germany. I came from Poland. I had a slight Polish accent. I could speak Polish as well as I could speak German. Politically, I had no contact with what was happening in Germany.

So it certainly was something which I found as a kid almost as repulsive as anything. I mean, I never had seen Germany before. My father being German himself, I expected the land of milk and honey, in some ways. But I saw a country in strife, political killings, and so on. People just said their mum.

Did you see actual persecution of the Jews?

I saw, in 1938, the Kristallnacht. I was in school. I had come home in Berlin. During that time, well, at least the streets where I went down, nothing had happened, you know?

But my sister had a different route. She came about half an hour later. She was just crying, completely clinging to my father. Said, what's going on? What's going on?

I mean, we had never seen this before. Of course, Germany was, I mean, completely out of bounds. Because the Nazis interrupted any orderly democratic process.

There were street fights. That was the order of the day, at least in our section because we were poor. We had no money, just a small pension. But we lived in the worst section of Berlin, prostitution in East Berlin, and so on.

But what turned out to be a sort of almost illegal section of Berlin, because prisoners and later on KZ prisoners, that was the only place where they could live. Because the so-called finer society, of course, didn't want to live next door to a former concentration camp inmate.

They were released?

They were released.

From concentration camps?

You know, actually, just as soon as Hitler came to power, about three days after, they collected everyone who was politically against them. The history documents say that there were probably 250,000 people taken in. Their procedure was they had emptied the prisons and had given prisoners wine, alcohol, and go into these camps with steel rods and beat up everything in reach. That's how they broke unionists. That's how they broke anyone who was potentially adverse.

I can tell you, where we lived, across the street there was a little tailor shop. This man had a son. Actually, he had long hair. He looked a little bit like a hippie at that time. Of course, it was a target for the Nazis to begin with.

As soon as Hitler came to power, this young man was arrested. He was a member of the Communist youth movement. That, of course, did it, too.

Was he Jewish?

No. But I mean, I would say I don't know. But he was arrested and after four weeks released.

But he came back a vegetable. This young man lived, maybe, no, 8 years or so. This man was maybe 17 or 18 years old. He came back completely gray-haired, completely unable to comprehend what was going on around him.

He was hardly able to speak. His family just had him sit there and do little tailoring work. This was, maybe, a good example how Germans were silenced.

Did your family have very many Jewish friends in Germany?

Yeah. I mean, through Heubner, mostly. Dr. Oldenburg, that's the name, and of course, Mrs. Heubner. Actually, many Jewish people were on the run. They didn't want to have a permanent address, and so on. Simply living in a sort of despised section of town, our place was probably a better hiding place than others.

Did you have the opportunity to do that?

Yes, yes. We almost had one or two persons staying in our home. We didn't know even who they were.

How did this come about?

Actually, Mrs. Heubner, you know, she was an activist. I mean, she touched everything which was anti-Nazi or Jewish. The other thing is there was shortage of food. Now my father had nothing to do but live on his little pension.

But we had a sort of a hunting ground in Poland. That was the sport of the society. He was a businessman.

So he went hunting. We had many friends who had estates in the country. My father went out hunting. In a time of shortage of food, of course, he saw to it that he killed as many deer or wild boar. This meat was used A, to feed people, because this was a source of meat which they couldn't stop, you know?

Who did he give it to? How did that happen?

Whoever came, whoever needed it.

He would just--

And to bribe Nazis to do certain things, you know.

What kinds of things?

Well, maybe just provide, illegally, original food coupons. See, you couldn't buy food until you gave a coupon to the merchant. So these Nazis, they just gave you a handful of food coupons. They got 20 pounds of wild boar or whatever.

Your father then gave these coupons to whom?

To Jewish, or other, we had neighbors who had been communists or who had been socialists. I mean, actually, some were really nothing but criminals anyhow. But they were also to be killed. Because they had a criminal record, they were, therefore, of course, not worthy to be alive, you know? So all people were in need around us.

Did Mrs. Huebner come to your father?

Father? Mainly my mother. Actually, my father was out killing deer. But my mother was just a activist day and night, really. I mean, there was nothing--

Tell me some of the kinds of things you saw her do.

Oh, for instance, also storing property. People knew they would be picked up. They had maybe one or two suitcases. They came to us to store it. We had only a 2 and 1/2 room apartment. People came there to just have lightweight to flee, you know, picking it up later.

Simply, Mrs. Huebner said, I cannot give you food, but go to the Knuemanns. They have some.

Mrs. Huebner worked a lot with the Jews?

Yes, actually, entirely.

Entirely.

Lisa Huebner is her name. Of course, Huebner had a dual-- I mean, outwardly, he was highly regarded. His wife made a fool out of herself-- actually, I think, they one time we were invited to the chancellery with Hitler. She shouted over "this criminal dreamer," you know, that kind of stuff.

No action was taken against him?

I would say they preferred not to. I mean, again, you would think that a person like that would be just-- I'm sure here the secret service would just pick her up and do her in, you know? But there social standing has a certain value. It protects you from sort of that the mortals can grab you and handle you. You know this whole thing, of course, was a bluff you could only survive this Nazi regime by bluffing them into submission.

There was another famous family, Schlomer, he is a psychiatrist. Actually, he had a wife and two children. He was the owner of a famous clinic in West Berlin. It still exists as part of the West Berlin Free University.

They had divorced. Dr. Schlomer had opened a clinic in Massachusetts. But his wife and two children remained in Berlin.

Now that was a bad divorce. The father didn't care about whether the Nazis killed them or not. I mean, I wouldn't say that.

You mean, the family was Jewish?

Yeah. But you know how it is in divorce. Emotions can go very, very high. She was a very beautiful woman, her daughters also. Through contacts which my mother established, they were able to flee to Hungary.

What did you know of that, your mother's assistance? Can you tell us about it? Can you tell us the story?

Anything, it was daily something else.

Tell us about how your mother enabled them.

See, the Schlomers were friends of Heubners. Socially, they met. Then Mrs. Schlomer came up. Where do we go?

See, where can help come from? Actually, Elie Wiesel always said where can it come from? What promoted people to do something?

Most of the people who helped Jews were not Jewish themselves. They really had no reason. But they had reasons. Most of them had problems with the Nazis of their own.

Did your family have problems with the Nazis?

Yeah. I mean, my father was honorary consul in Poland for the Weimar Republic. One day, he traveled in a train to Poland in first class compartment, of course. There was another man sitting there. This other man took a valise, opened it, and unfolded the Nazi party newspaper.

My father, seeing it, he got up, took his suitcase, and said I don't wish to share the compartment with a person who reads the Nazi newspaper. This was, mind you, in 1928, four, five years before Hitler took power. But the Nazis already had wormed their men into official positions.

This was where?

In Germany, but en route, on a train going to Poland.

Back to Poland?

Back to Poland.

--where you lived at the time.

But this man whom he said this to was actually his replacement. My father didn't know that, that the German consulate would become an official, full-fledged consulate. My father had to be replaced. I mean, as a matter of course, because the business was greater than he could probably handle. But this man, of course, did a report on my father.

He was on the outs, then?

I mean, he was blacklisted. When we came to Germany, my father was told that he would never get a job ever. See, dictators should be really very careful. They shouldn't make too many enemies, because that does them in at one time or the other, you know?

This was your father's impetus to lash back?

No, not really. His action five years before Hitler took power towards this man probably describes how he felt about the Nazis. He said I cannot stand a man who reads that Nazi paper. So you can imagine that he was just opposed to this whole thing.

Did you parents have a strong religious--

No.

--orientation?

Not really. I mean, because we are a mixed family. My father is Catholic. My mother is Lutheran. Being of Polish-Hungarian descent, somehow, she was Lutheran and my father German Catholic.

In fact, his uncle was a bishop. The Catholic bishop of Berlin, Weber who, by all accounts, was not quite kosher. He had tried, like many Catholic officials, to bridge, at least to see what can be saved. Somehow did not oppose Hitler from the very start.

But he died in 1935, this bishop. His stance had no bearing on anything. But it would have been better if this man would have stood up for-- but you know, those who don't resist finally get pulled in.

I mean, this is unavoidable. If you have a system like that, which is just devouring its citizens, you can wait a little longer. But you are eaten, too, you know. The dragon gets you.

Of course, if you live in a poverty area, it is much easier to be outside the establishment because your surrounding expects you to be different from what is the establishment and the holders of power. Somehow our location was ideal. Because the Nazis never could penetrate there.

These were the outlaws. These were the despised members of society. I mean, just by the location where we lived, we were nobody, you know?

But for the society where we lived and the neighborhood where we lived, they could see that we-- let's say, we are not asocial like some people there were. My father was rather a conservative, really, than socialist or something like that. But he had a burning desire. Injustice, he just couldn't stand.

Actually, I'll give you an example. We moved into an apartment, the first apartment we had. There was this little boy from this tailor.

He probably had been to a meeting of communist youth, or even drinking or something. He came home at 2 o'clock in the morning. Suddenly, somebody goes to the window in the apartment above us, and shoots down into the street, trying to hit this boy.

My father being a hunter, although he was sick, but he heard this shot. He said what's going on here. So he looked upwards, and he could see that the hand was held out of that window.

Now what does my father do? Get dressed. Goes down, collects the shells, the spent shells. He could see nobody was hit. But next morning, he took these spent shells and went to the police.

I was present. I went along with him because his health wasn't so good. That was probably December '32, just about four weeks before Hitler came to power.

This policeman said where do you live, Mr. Knuemann? There, there. What floor? He said Mr. Knuemann, do you know that above you lives a chauffeur of Dr. Goebbels?

What a coincidence. I mean, I could see there was a big Mercedes always parked in front of our house. He came late in the evening. This man was a Mr. Franzka, Goebbels' chauffeur. he was, of course, a fanatic Nazi. He just couldn't stand that there was somebody pulling on the other side.

So the policeman told my father. That was my illustration, what country I had come to. He said this man is Goebbels' chauffeur. Are you crazy to file a complaint against him? I, as a policeman, know what happens in cases like that. The next thing you know is that they arrest you instead of him.

My father said I, as a German citizen, demand that this report will be taken. I go down, and I stand for this has been done.

So it was the chauffeur that was shooting at the tailor's son?

At this boy, you know? But that was the order of the day. Political terror was the order of the day at that time, a month before Hitler took power.

How long did the people you were hiding in your home stay with you?

Oh, two, three days, very short.

They were on their way?

On their way either to the Swiss border, or the Dutch border, or the French border, or the Hungarian border, or anything. They had false papers. Their real identities were actually--

How many in the party?

Usually, one.

One.

One.

All by themselves, women, or actually--

How many times did your mother take in people?

[LAUGHTER]

Actually, I would say, twice a week or so. Actually, I didn't find anything unusual. I thought life is just like that. As a kid, you just say OK. If the world is dark, so it's dark. There were people, these people were enormously friendly and all that.

Did you ever hear from any of these people after the war?

The funny thing is no. Because our home was bombed out, and actually, I did hear-- of course, Mrs. Huebner was there. She had the link and greetings from them.

Berlin was not open not an open city at all. It was still in the Russian zone of occupation. West Germans didn't come to Berlin, really. Couldn't come. We couldn't go to West Germany, either.

So there was really no normal communication until '50 or so. By that time, most people had emigrated into the United States or into-- see, like, the Schlomer family, see their only goal was to reach Hungary. Because Mrs. Schlomer was born in Hungary. This was the psychiatrist's wife, that he was safe.

Actually, of course, human elements always come into. There is this question, of course, they are in love with somebody. So if you know what I mean, you don't give it up. Even death is not a hindrance. You stick it out. You muddle through, you know?

There was Miss Schlomer, she was in love with somebody, couldn't leave. She was-- can't leave, and so on. Finally, it became obvious that it was a matter of hours. So they had to disappear. They stayed with us. The daughter is still living in Berlin.

Now how to get through to Hungary? Now how do you think you go through? You go to a Gypsy musician. There was a Gypsy musician living four houses next to us, you know, apartment. Because they always looked somehow flamboyant, we knew them. My mother talked to them.

They said how do we get somebody to Hungary? Out of the blue, suddenly we had a contact, a guy who could guide them, Gypsies, by the way, who could guide them through Czechoslovakia through to the Hungarian border, through the Carpathian Mountains, through snow.

See, I went to Budapest in '43 in March. They told me how this all happened. Of course, this guy, shortly before they reached the Hungarian border, said give me 500 marks more. You know?

I mean, the agreed price, I don't know, was maybe 1,000 marks. You know? But that's always done. Everybody gets his little cut. After all, we're living in a capitalist system. Gypsies know how valuable money is. This was the rescue of a life. But they safely came to Budapest.

Was your family ever offered money to help?

No, actually, you know, money didn't mean anything. We had a source of income, which you wouldn't believe. We were in black market.

Because of your father's hunting?

Hunting, that was one source. But also, I, as a kid at school, I think finally I got close to a million marks. Coffee, diamonds from Belgium Congo. I mean, that I had time to go and study and still make the grade, it's still a miracle to me.

Because we lived near a railroad station. That was also why our location was ideal. The people didn't have to walk long through the streets. They could just-- simply half a block from us was the Stettiner Bahnhof Stettin Railroad station. They could just go there. We knew where to stand without being observed.

So I went to this railroad station right from when I came to Berlin. Because it was fascinating to see railroads coming and going. It was a major transportation.

Of course, during the war, then, more and more Bulgarians, Romanians, Hungarians, Polish, French, Belgium, Holland, people were engaged in being porters on the sleeping cars. Of course, I established fantastic contacts with these porters.

I mean, to send a letter, which didn't have to be inspected, this was a means. These porters took letters from Brest-Litovsk to Brest in France.

What was the nature of these communications?

Simply appeals for help, to sponsor a visa application of this kind, to get out of it, you know?

This was early?

No, that was during the war, still. America was not in war. There was this big run for the Yankee clipper from Lisbon to New York.

What year was this?

'40, 1940, '39, '40. See, America only went to war in '42, after the Japanese. There was a link to America. Because officially, you couldn't write. You couldn't write please send me money, or please put in for a visa application.

These were Gentiles and Jews?

No, Jews, mostly.

Jews.

There were 100, 200 people lining up in front of the American embassy in 1940 of Jews who still wanted to get out here, or '39. There were American journalists writing across Nazi Germany in '39 and 1940. I saw several of them on the railroad.

My family's actually from Essen, the Krupp works, you know? Our family's concentrated in Essen only. There are 26 Knuemanns in Essen. But this family, also, they were staunchly Catholic. So somehow, of course, they got in trouble with the Nazis per se.

Because?

Of their Catholic faith. See, the first thing the Nazis did, they suddenly discovered that the priests were homosexuals, misusing the children, everything under the book. There were big showcase actions, I mean, legal actions taken. They were forced to sign that they did this or that.

Of course, that didn't endear the Nazis to more staunchly Catholic fellows. It was mainly, then, really a cultural, civil dispute, which was so overriding that I personally don't share. I mean, religion is fine and good. But I think what you do counts. What you do, not what you say.

Let me ask you. In the times that your mother were helping these families, were you ever waited? Did the police ever come to your home looking for these people?

The funny thing, not. Actually, only one, actually because of black market activity.

The police came to your house because they thought you were involved in the black market?

A black market would be nothing. But I dealt in the highest price commodity anyone could have in Germany at that time. It was saccharin. It was sugar substitute.

How did I do this? Simply, my school friend, now an actor at the Josefstadt Theater in Vienna, he's, like, a very famous movie actor here. He's a movie actor, theater, TV, and all that. His father produced little refreshment drinks, like Kool-Aid, only it was effervescent, not still water, Kool-Aid.

During the war, his factory was confiscated and ordered, under contract of the German armed forces, to pack saccharin. Now my friend's father liked to eat, too. So he got the meat. We got the saccharin.

We traded the saccharin for, I mean, it was something like \$1,000 a pound, which was really a heavy thing. Of course, you had middlemen, middlemen, middlemen, and so on. Then, finally, it was given to someone who was an SS spy. They rolled it back.

But the funny thing, they didn't find it. Because we had hidden the merchandise. We had a big marmalade jar. It was supposed to be filled with sand to squash firebombs. Now we had sand on top, but saccharine underneath.

They failed to search this. Otherwise, there was death penalty on it. Because this was armed forces material or supply. Any diversion of this was just considered a capital offense.

Did your neighbors know that your mother was taking in Jews and hiding them and shipping them out?

Yeah. Our neighbor was a sleeping car porter from Romania, a very adventurous woman. She was actually a bandleader in a ladies orchestra, I mean, in former times. And somehow got together with a German banker, but he had syphilis. All these, I mean, very human things. She just didn't like him. He died, actually.

But she was in it, too. Then what I didn't know or we didn't know, she came. But she had people from us staying with her, too. I mean, there was no question about it. There was an overflow at our place, so they went there. Frau Meyer took them in. She wasn't even home for three, four days a week because she was on tour.

Later, she became a mail sorter in the postal vans while the express trains were riding through Germany. They sorted the mail for the appropriate cities and that was dumped out. So we could use her apartment.

She was in the black market, too. We all had to. We didn't have-- my father had TB. That became progressive, more and more and more. Food was just as essential as can be. He had invitations to come for a cure to the veterans' hospital. His friends went. They all got killed. Because anyone who had an incurable disease was killed.

Whether they were Jewish or Gentile?

See, this is just-- I think Mr. Wiesel here, somehow, you know, everybody had problems, everybody. Of course, not being the super target of this regime was a little bit more comfortable.

But the wrong move you made, you had it. You were, also. Just listening to foreign broadcasts, which I did, when they started, '35, Radio Strasbourg started. The only thing I listened to when I came home in the afternoon was Radio Strasbourg. I went out, told everybody how the real things looked.

I'd like to know if you feel that your war experiences have changed in any way your religious beliefs, your political involvement.

My political involvement? Of course. That's why I became a journalist.

I studied law. I thought it was ridiculous to study law because political action, that does it. One thing I know, laws don't protect anyone.

We know it in this country quite well also. Because the law always favors the establishment. Laws are never liberal, you know. It is so easy to, like today, Mr. Reagan can persuade probably everyone, like Hitler did, with increasing job opportunities, having money for everyone, making big, big debts which have to be paid later.

But he gets elected, exactly like Hitler. They increase the volume of money, and suddenly everybody, at least, had money. Well, it wasn't worth much, but the psychological attitude of people change.

I feel, but I tell everyone, I'm not a journalist. I'm an agitator. I mean, I have a little news service. Whatever I can do to direct people to where it hurts. And I don't care what religion or what, but where people have physical or psychological hurt, that's where I come in. That's when I write about it.

I just wish that everything would be cleaned up, what has been. That everything, why people did it, why they didn't do it, and so this commission can certainly help. But unfortunately, our government has failed in many cases.

Like the Barbie case, you know? I know the lady who hunted him down. I know Wiesenthal. But I know also my case. Here is this case, which I wanted to tell you about, too.

Perhaps you should mention that now.

Religion is, of course, if you have no other motive, then religion is very important. But if you are a person who cannot see that somebody suffers in front of you, where you see it, I am not the one who turns his back to this. If a giant would attack a small animal even, I would help the small animal. If it's a human being, the more I will help. I don't care.

As I said, I was arrested by the Nazis later. I got caught in Denmark. I was in prison. My fate was done with. Even then, I didn't feel upset about it or so. I knew that I had to help the Danes in whatever capacity I could. I came there--

At what point did you leave Germany?

I mean, I was drafted. I went back. I deserted, and I went back to Berlin to buy weapons.

See, I had my black market contacts still. Weapons were needed. Actually, for the Danes, small weapons, you know, most of the weapons dropped by the British went into the water and to the marshes and were picked up by Germans. There was a very high need for--

What group were you working with in Denmark?

Actually, it was Frenchmen. See, there were, in France lives a large group of German-speaking Frenchmen. They were reluctant, or they were pressed into the German forces.

But they were not trusted by the German command. So they put them as occupation forces into Denmark. There were lots of them. But of course, these Frenchmen all had their French uniforms already in their suitcase. They, of course, had the contacts with the underground.

In Denmark?

In Denmark.

What kinds of things did they do?

Blowing up bridges, rescuing Jews, and so on.

And you worked with them?

I mean, actually the man in charge of provisions for that company was a Frenchman, his colleagues, and so-- I mean, you just looked at each other and you knew you could trust them. I mean, there was a very, very easy, or what I thought was very easy.

See, it was a matter of survival, a sense of people you meet, at once. Because you couldn't wait two minutes, two seconds. You had to know are they Nazis or not. What can you talk about?

See, all that, what the Germans claim is so unknown, could have been known by every German. But the German who says I didn't know about the extermination of Jews, tells you right away that he must have been a Nazi. Because the anti-Nazis or the people who didn't like, they talked about it all the time.

Because that was the only mainstay. This kept you alive. Because your life had no purpose. Because your government was a bunch of gangsters. What future was there?

There were too many. You couldn't kill them all. You couldn't do anything. You couldn't say anything. You were done in, period.

So just being able to talk to somebody was psychologically so essential, whether it was a Jew, or a Gypsy, or anyone who was in the ring of prosecuted persons had to talk to each other. Because it reinforced your hope at one time there will be another world.

My father got killed in Berlin by an air raid. Certainly, we discussed this before. We both, our whole family said, no matter what, no matter if we get killed, no matter, as long as we know that this man on top would be down.

Your father was killed by who?

During an American air raid. But he had TB. He was sick. He couldn't be moved to the air raid shelter. So the whole thing was just-- I mean. But that didn't-- some people say I feel sorry. I feel proud.

[CRYING]

Because his death at least shows no matter what happens to you, the other person is your concern, not you.

I'm speaking with Carl Knuemann. I would like to thank him very much for this interview, which I know will be a valuable part of the Oral History Library. Thank you.