

OK. Any time.

OK. When we quit, we were talking about Nazis, interviewing Nazis.

Mm-hmm.

I had a question. It just seems to have left my mind.

It'd be nice to talk to one to ask him questions how they-- although I pretty much understand. First, they needed-- some of them needed jobs, I guess. Then they do one thing.

And then they see them killing people. And they stand and watch and say nothing. And slowly, they turn into a stone, some of them. Some of them are already there with hate and resentment. But it will be interesting to hear-- to come face to face with one.

You think you'd be able to handle it emotionally?

I keep-- depending on my logic, what's the point of attacking this person if I didn't see him in camp, if he didn't touch me? I don't-- what's the point of-- it would be better to understand what he thinks or did think in the past.

But there were times that I'd like to string up a Nazi and keep him in one room and cut off a finger at a time. But that's past. Yeah. I used to fantasize about that and tell my husband it would be nice to take this piece and this piece. I'll come back to this later and with a bucket of water and sprinkle it a little. And he'll beg me for it, these fantasies.

But I really don't think I have the capacity to do what they did. But you can't understand how it is that so many of them did it.

But would you be able to hear the excuses, because sometimes I think what happened was what they did was so horrendous that-- and people who were-- they felt this anger engendered towards them.

So when people tried to say, why did you do it, all they felt was the anger. And they, instead of-- maybe they couldn't have gone inside themselves to say why they did it. But even the ones that could have didn't, because all they felt was anger and judgment. So they just came up with these excuses.

They came up with these excuses. But can you really talk to Jeffrey Dahmer? You know Jeffrey Dahmer, right?

He's the guy who--

Ate the bodies or something, then murdered the boys, men, and ate the bodies or something.

Maybe not.

Can you really talk to him? What explanation will he give you to why he did what he did?

I think that's very often a problem.

You cannot come up with an answer. For us victims, we cannot get a logical answer. If we had a logical answer, we could let go. But we don't have a logical answer to this.

We don't have one Nazi come forward and say, I fell into this and I kept doing it. And I'm sorry. This was horrible. I had one child, 14 years old, in Dachau tell me that.

Tell you what?

I came out looking at Dachau with Eric and all the people, Japanese people. There were German young girls sitting there. And one blonde girl was crying and approached me. And she says, you have a number. And she says, I don't understand why my parents did this to you. And I'm ashamed.

And I said, well, you needn't to feel the burden. You just learn from it so it doesn't happen again. And she just wouldn't let-- she just said she couldn't forgive them. She couldn't forgive her country.

And she has to live with this heaviness. She comes to Dachau once a week to look at it. And she says she doesn't understand how they could have done this. She's trying to understand it.

She's coping, trying to understand it so she can go on. I'm coping, trying to understand so I can go on. And it leaves a lot of damaged people behind.

Maybe it's not a logical explanation. Maybe it's-- I don't know how to say this exactly. Maybe it's the heart explanation.

How do you explain the fact that they had Red Cross come in or some officials come in in-- was it in Auschwitz or someplace? I didn't see it. And they spruced everything up, made everything look so beautiful. Didn't anybody from Red Cross say you have no right to lock these people up behind bars?

How come that person believed the Nazis? How come they didn't say, well, why are they in these camps to begin with? Because they're Jews? Why didn't they question it further?

Why didn't take a step further and say, but why did you take them away from the business? Why did you take the store, loot the store? Why didn't they do this? Why? They had Red Cross people go through Auschwitz or some camp.

Terezin.

Huh?

Terezin.

OK, some camp. And I heard about this someplace. And the Nazis took him and look how they work here. They do the artwork here. They made it look like a picnic. They had music and tea time.

But didn't it dawn on this Red Cross person, why do they have these people behind bars? Why didn't they question it further? That is the answer I'd like to know. Why did they just accept it?

If we're going to be accepting things, then where are we taking ourselves? We're accepting right now. We're accepting murders. We're accepting prejudice. We're accepting murders. So how far are we going to accept this?

Maybe that's the--

The rape of women. How long are we going to keep on making the-- any time that somebody doesn't believe my story and has the nerve to come and tell me, then I only tell them, do they believe a woman that's raped and they put her through trial? I told this to Eric. But they don't believe a woman is raped, either.

A lot of people still don't. In fact, in the '60s, it was only foolish women would get--

Yeah. Right. Well, the weak ones end up in-- now, I was a weak one. I was weak at 16-- end up raped. Or the ones that are vulnerable or something-- because I can't see myself. When I walk the streets, I don't walk against the walls. I walk outside of the cars.

Now?

Yes, all the time. I could not survive rape right now. I could not survive what I already know. I think it'll break me. So I avoid it like plague-- not be found in a position.

So in a way, being stronger makes you weaker?

Yeah, in a way. But the thing is that I don't find myself in situations, unless I want to follow up with it.

I'm sorry?

Unless I want to have sex with a guy, I don't go in his room. I don't go in hotel rooms. I wouldn't go in the alleys. There are places you just don't go. I've been protecting myself since my case a lot that way, being careful.

I've been interested in this question of why did the Nazis do what they did. And why after the war did you get basically-- you either got excuses. Or you got surface answers.

It really is true men needed a job. So this is a job. It's really true that German nationalism was really a big movement at that point in time. And so there are many secret societies that were very nationalistic and very prejudiced.

Why did they believe that Jews were a problem or diseased or vermin of the Earth? When it started the propaganda, why-- Christ killer or whatever they want to do. So what? That happened so long ago.

I can't pay a price-- I can't feel guilty for something that Blacks were brought as slaves here. I can't feel guilty for that. I didn't do it. And I wouldn't do it. So I'm in the modern era. Yeah, there are some times that I make a slight explanation to myself on that.

But does that satisfy?

No. I say to myself, well, if you lived next door and I'm your friend and you're my neighbor and you suddenly disappeared and I went to the Nazis and asked them where you are and they told me to shut up my mouth or they'll take my son and kill him, I'll shut up my mouth.

Or if I knew-- if there's a neighbor to neighbor and we know that you're going to be-- we know that you're Jewish, but we're not going to tell. But if we don't tell, my family is going to be killed, then maybe I tell. I don't know. Maybe that's the emotional part that we victims have to come to understand to what people do under what circumstances.

We're not talking about-- we're not talking about all killers. We're talking about several thousand that actually took the bodies and killed. And there are rumors that he took criminals out of jails and made them captains and lieutenants.

And they were the ones shooting and killing people, like you and I think take Dahmer and Manson and we make them soldiers, proud of themselves. Give them guns. Kill these Jews. Maybe there is a group of those.

I can't accept-- I was in Munich from Israel. And I looked at the door, and they have all these beautiful little cupids and things, artistic. And I couldn't help but make a remark. People with all this beauty around, could they really kill Jews? I can't put it together.

Most people can't, because to people-- the more reading and talking I've done, it's very hard for people to put together that people who loved classical music could also do the things that the SS men did.

Well, to kill-- I'll never be able to understand it, either, to talk classical music and to murder a girl age of his daughter maybe and never ask himself a question and say, well, I'm sorry, but I have a daughter this age. This could be my daughter.

Where's the conscience? This, I have a hard time to understand, the ones that really did the killing. But there are a lot of

Germans that just fell into bureaucratic jobs and around. Maybe those are the ones making excuses.

Or maybe they're so ashamed, it will crush their whole life's belief if they accept that they did this. But one explanation somewhere would be nice.

I think you may be right. It may be impossible to get the-- it's sort of like-- you're right. Asking Jeffrey Dahmer why he did what he did is ultimately futile. It isn't necessarily that he wouldn't tell you if he knew. He doesn't know.

He doesn't know. And those Nazis don't know.

I knew a girl once who she started having those kind of psychological problems when she was 13. And she was taken to a therapist. And they wanted to know what's wrong. And she said, my mother makes me do housework.

Everybody's mother makes them do housework. That doesn't make you psychologically have problems. And they believed her. They believed that this was the reason. Nobody ever caught on to the fact that she was a victim of incest. Nobody ever got that.

My question is how Hitler was able to attract the people to do this job. They had-- is it in 60 Minutes? No, on something else-- young boy that was adopted that had "mom" and "dad" on the bullets. And he shot his adoptive parents.

He called his adoptive mother and said, come home. I have a beautiful present for you. And he blew her brains out. And he's now on trial.

He says, how many times do you want me to say I'm sorry, judge? So there you are. This is a born killer. How are you going to get an explanation from him? He said he wanted them to suffer like he suffered, but they never did anything to him.

But you see, my opinion is that's not true. My opinion is that they never thought they did anything. And he couldn't really identify what they did. But most abuse is very subtle and very difficult to identify. And that's what I was talking about with the--

But they investigated the parents. There was no abuse. They were very warm adoptive parents. But the guy obviously resented being adopted. He took out on adoptive parents what he wanted to do to the real mother that rejected him, probably.

How old was he when he was adopted?

Year or so.

That could be. They say the first year of life is the most important. But I hate to get away from the Holocaust here. And my point when I started talking about that was that with these SS men, I don't think-- I'm wondering if it's possible to get a real answer, the deep-down, soul-deep answer-- to their actions if they haven't gotten really good therapy. And I really sincerely doubt most have.

I would say that air of the times-- it was the air of the times. It was in the air to kill Jews. And some of them shut the doors and didn't look. Some of them fought back and got the same treatment. They can't tell us that they fought back. Some of them died on the streets spitting at a Nazi's face.

Some of them lived being married to a Jew and having a Jew, their husband or wife, in the camp while they were a pure German. And they just lived with this and couldn't understand it and dealt with Nazis-- maybe talked to them and said, get my wife out and all that. But sorry, we can't because they're of different species. They're sick and terrible people.

Every day, people rationalize their behavior. If I murdered my parents, I have two choices. I would want to be killed for it, because I wouldn't want to live with the guilt. But if I'm kept alive long enough, I would say I've paid my dues with

my guilt. And I don't want to talk about it anymore.

So I think that's what the Germans are doing. They know what they did. And there's nothing they can repair, the ones that are sane enough to have a conscience. And the ones that are really guilty of killings, they don't have a conscience. How can you talk to sociopaths? Hitler had a way of gathering sociopaths around him, criminals.

I'm wondering, we always talk about preventing another Holocaust. I'm wondering if it's possible without getting the very deepest answer and then being satisfied--

Yeah, it's possible by rising up when one family disappears. What right does one family have to disappear? Where did they go? And we pursue it till we get an answer, before the machine guns face our faces.

Fear is a bigger bullet than a bullet. If you have a choice between life and death, maybe you'll take death and speak up to a Nazi. Or maybe you shut up and stand still. We don't know when we're put to test what we're going to do, at a moment when the pistol faces our brain. We don't know.

I know what it feels like. I only know that it didn't go off. And it's a shock when it doesn't go off. It's total shock. It blows your mind. If it goes off, then it's the end. You don't feel a thing. But when it doesn't go off, you've got that to cope with for years, too.

You mean the fact that--

The fact that they pulled the trigger and nothing happened, no bullet. That's horrible, how close you can come, because once you're in front of a gun, you want to die. You want to get it over with. You don't want to spend another day waiting to be shot.

So you don't know. I think we can prevent this from happening by the fact that the Jews now have a country, have a good army-- never ever. I think America's making mistakes getting rid of all these bases and things. Come on, we have to have military all the time.

We're just leaving ourselves wide open. But I don't think Jews will ever let it happen to them again. But of course, it depends on the new generation, doesn't it?

So if we don't find out from the people who did it the soul-deep answer as to why they did it and why people who watched let it happen, have we really made any progress? If all you do is interview the victims, can you really change anything?

I think it's already changed in America. I don't think America could-- American human beings could do this. In our country, it's already changed. I don't think we would allow anything like this to be happening.

There's too many of us with conscience and goodness. And we preach goodness. We talk goodness.

But it's mind boggling how Hitler got-- all I want to know is how did he get so many people to join him. And that's where the answer lies, isn't it? How in the first place did he get all these people to do it with him?

And that's the same problem as we have with Jeffrey Dahmer, which is--

Why did you do--

We're never going to get that answer.

Yeah. Well, how? Hitler's dead. Who is left? Did they ever interview any Nazis yet?

John Steiner has actually interviewed about 50.

And what's his answer?

I don't know because they're all in German. We're in the process of trying to get them translated so we know what's in them. He knows because he knows German.

So what's his answer?

I haven't talked to him. But I'd like to.

Who is he, somebody here in town?

Oh, no. He's actually at Sonoma.

Oh, John Steinbeck. Sounds familiar.

John Steiner.

Steiner.

John Steinbeck's the writer.

Steiner.

But there's a few people who have interviewed Nazis.

Yeah. And?

And they very seldom get anything more than the surface answer, which is I needed a job or I would have been killed or whatever. But it's not a satisfactory answer. What about-- have you read--

Well, what would be the satisfactory answer to you?

To me? The real psychological reason behind it. And I've read-- have you read Alice Miller's book, For Your Own Good? Have you heard of that?

No.

She's a Swiss psychiatrist. And in it, she uses some well-known Nazis and their well-known childhoods to explain what she thinks was the ultimate reason behind it, which doesn't mean all the other reasons weren't reasons also.

The ultimate reason is religion. It says in the Bible that Jews killed Christ. That's where it all began.

But you also had your Christians who saved Jews.

True.

When your--

But Hitler picked up on that one point. He picked up on that comment, that comment. Why was that comment there? Did the Jews killed Jesus?

Well--

What did they do to him?

Are you asking me?

Yeah. I don't know what religion you are, but I'm asking why was that in the Bible to begin with, because he kind of lived up to that.

It was in the Bible originally because he was born a Jew. And the Jewish people wanted him dead. In fact--

Jewish people wanted Jesus dead for what?

Not the Jewish people, a few Jewish people whose incomes and whose lives were--

Threatened--

Threatened by him.

So it's politics. The Nazis-- tell me the Nazis took over your jewelry, your clothes, your houses, your property. It was business with them.

Yeah.

It was business. They wanted-- you guys are so good at business. And they had to be in the background someplace. And you would charge them a dollar more, whatever the national money is.

They developed a resentment towards successful people that live in mansions and lovely houses. Jealousy, politics, and greed is--

So that wasn't religion, though. That's jealousy, politics, and greed.

But Hitler used the story of the Bible that-- Christ killer.

Yeah. Yeah. And that, unfortunately, at the time was something that people had in their heads. I would like-- since you asked me, at this point, I don't want to leave it at what I said because that's the straight fact. But I don't believe the Jews alone killed Christ. They needed the Romans to do it.

Discuss.

So everybody did it.

Yeah.

And that's the theological truth.

But they put it in the Bible that the Jews did it.

Well, that's because of the fact that he was born Jewish. And it was those politicians.

What I'm saying is the pen is mightier than the sword.

Yeah. What I'm trying to say is that I'm not saying the Jews killed Christ in the sense that Hitler used it. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Mm-hmm.

I'm very sorry I got into this because I don't--

Why? Because you can't carry it out?

No, because I find it very hard to say it in a way that doesn't sound like Hitler said it. But I don't mean it that way at all. I mean the fact was Jesus was a Jew.

He lived in a Jewish state. He made some Jewish people very angry with him. They wanted to kill him. They used the Romans to do it. Theologically--

So it's politics.

It was politics.

Religion is politics.

And it certainly wasn't every Jew. And it certainly didn't carry down to any Jew beyond the few who did it. So that's what I'm trying to say, I guess.

Well, I'm trying to say that if the Jews did not get so involved in the religion, maybe they would have fought back, because I'm mad about that. I was just a child. And I could see the Jews lined up.

And there were only a few Nazis. If we split in half, we could have died in glory. They wouldn't split in half. They just went like lambs to the slaughter, Jews.

Yeah.

Why didn't they fight back right there and then on the trolley tracks, everywhere they could? Dogs? So what?

I couldn't understand that. I couldn't understand that. They have to get armed. I understand. But couldn't they just go ahead and die in glory by attacking the Nazis? Every 20, 30 Jews, there were just two Nazis. We could overwhelm them, take the guns, shoot the hell out of-- I always was thinking of that in camp.

But everybody was praying and believing that no, they couldn't kill us. We're going to live. We're going to work. Why did they believe the stories? They were such a good people.

But good doesn't work when you're with enemies like that. But I had a very interesting thing happen to me. Speaking of religion or prejudice, there's this Jewish lady is 90-some years old. And when I lived in San Francisco, I gave her-- I would volunteer a day to drive her to Ahern's bakery to pick up her pastry, groceries, and stuff.

I would work as a volunteer. So she knew my story. And I said, well, I'm going to have to go to your synagogue sometime and see what it looks like.

And she says, I wouldn't have a dirty Catholic dirty up my-- what do you call those places where you pray for? Where you sit? That was an unusual remark.

Vestibule?

It's a seat you buy and sit in in the synagogues.

I don't know.

Yeah. That was-- I never saw her again. I was dirty, too dirty to enter a Jewish synagogue because I'm Catholic. You



see, this is where it starts. This is the beginning.

This is why I get mad with my children in the ballet school. If they're laughing at one child that is clumsy and cannot move, I am furious, because to me, that's where it begins.

With each person.

With each person.

And how you treat them.

And how you treat them. Insensitivity to that child-- I have one child that's a cripple. And she's so clumsy. And she comes to me. Nina. Hey, Nina. Nina, help me. I want to know the step, but they'll laugh at me.

She clutches at my stuff. And I say, you go there and do it, darling. Just do it. Don't pay any attention to them. And one of them was actually standing there making fun. And I actually asked her to leave the class.

I said, I want you to go home. And I want you to talk to your God or your Buddha or whatever to why you're making fun of this child that's born with a harder time and no grace. But watch her three months from now. I'll give her that grace. And I'll work with her.

I can't stand it when people are bad to each other. I can't stand it between Norman and I. What? You have to yell? You can't talk to me?

We can talk to each other. This is where we have to clean up our act is among human beings. We have to-- oh, boy. Am I getting myself in trouble-- get rid of religions. Sorry. They breed this.

They breed this. Don't marry the Jew. Marry Catholic. You Catholic, marry Catholic, da, da, da, da. That right there is where it begins. Right there, there's some saying that the Jew smells or the Jew is less human being.

Or Catholic-- or a Jew making a remark about don't marry that Catholic. That's already implying something's wrong with that human being, that that human being is inferior. That right there is a problem.

So just artificial barriers?

What's that?

Barriers people create to say that other people are different--

Yeah--

In essence?

Or feeling that they're better because they're Catholic or they're better because they're Jews. I believe that these groups should be together in beliefs, because I tell you right now, I don't-- when somebody tells me that I'm prejudiced against Blacks, Black people, I say to them, I am not prejudiced.

But you're taking my choice away. You're taking my right to choose a white man for a husband or lover because I like the way white people act. And I don't want to get into one of those feathery things and shake around in church and yell hallelujah. That's not my style.

So that's the only reason I don't want to marry a Black man, because I don't want to be in a church screaming lungs out. I'm brought up to be more quiet and subdued in my group of people. So yes, I'll group. But I'll be darned if my father would ever allow us to say, don't marry a Jew or don't marry Catholic or don't marry Iranian or don't marry a Black.

So you're not talking about differences being the problem. You're talking about judging one to be superior than another.

That's right. I'm talking about superior brains that think they're better because they're Catholic or-- show me Japantown. Is there a white person being hired? Their excuse is-- no Blacks, no whites. The excuse is because they don't speak Japanese.

But if we wanted to speak Japanese all the way, then don't ask white people to buy your food in a restaurant. We'll go to Japan for that. Here, they should have both. They should mingle.

But everybody seems to go in their little corners. And then they fight. It's just like, why is it going on what's going on in Bosnia and starvation and all that? Why? Why destroy houses, time, children? Why?

Because they feel that they're better than this. They're better. Come on. When are we going to be 1993? But I believe that religions are breeders of prejudice.

So how do you hold God then in respect?

I have a God. Oh, yeah. My God is something unexplainable, something within me. And if I can get my family not to throw garbage out in the streets, not to murder people, to be kind to the neighbors and help them with the yard if the old lady can't do it, then I'm doing God's work.

That is my God. It's me running my life right and me helping other people not to be prejudiced and make remarks like this clumsy girl that they were making fun of in the dressing room. I literally physically took the girl by the hand, told her I never want to see her again.

She's back with apology. But I didn't expect to see her back. I was depending on the parent. Is the parent going to tell her, you're wrong, dear. and Nina is right?

Or is she going to hate me? See? But I won in this case. Little by little, I do this.

So you're saying you believe there is a God, but that the expression of God is not necessarily happened through for religious organizations?

I believe that religions are a crutch, that people-- if somebody tells me that Jesus helped me to do this and Jesus helped me to do that, I worry about it, because they did it, not Jesus. They did it. They cleaned up their act. They got off the dope. But believing in God to me is something-- I would connect it more with chemistry than I would with the body.

I'm not sure how you mean.

Well, the air, the heat, the sun, the moisture, the God, that's all in there. But I don't connect it with a man or woman or Buddha. I think that God is within us. And we have to do the right job by each breathing person.

And we have to learn. We've come a long way. And we have to become more civilized towards one another. And it's your duty when you get out of here to do everything you can on your way home to be courteous and polite. And it's my duty to do the same all day today.

This is, to me, God. But the person that throws garbage out in the streets and the person that rapes people or beats on children, they're not doing God's work. They don't have God in them. Something is wrong.

And that's where the psychiatrists come in, I guess. I believe psychologists can create no miracles. All they can do is open up a person about what's blocking their reasonable thinking and guide them into doing the right job so that-- what do I always say to my girls?

They say, well, I don't have any self-esteem, Yanina. I said, hey, self-esteem is nothing more than that you didn't lie to your mother. You didn't steal your girlfriend's sandwich. You didn't prostrate yourself. You did wash the cars daddy asked you to.

And you go in the mirror and you look at yourself and you like yourself, because you did everything so nice today. But if you're not doing these things and you yell at your mother and you run away and lie and go to your girlfriend and smoke pot, you're going to have no self-esteem. This is more or less what I feel that self-esteem is. It's doing well self-respecting things.

God? Yeah, I believe in God. But I cannot explain it, no more than you can explain love. I don't know how many times people ask me, you love Norman. What do you see in him? If I could explain it, I wouldn't love him.

So that's a mystery, just like Nazis can't explain it to us. You don't need an explanation about Nazis because the murderers are going to murder. There's-- out of a billion people, there is a small amount of people that are movers and shakers, presidents of America and corporations.

There is the group that is insane. There's the group that drinks. And there's the group that kills. And it's always in society. And there must be some reason for it. Maybe the reason is because if they didn't kill, we wouldn't appreciate the living, to live.

And if somebody didn't hurt you, you wouldn't know what no pain is. I don't know what the reason is. I'm hoping someday I go someplace up or down and find out. But even if we knew when we die, it's no good, because if I knew that a week from yesterday, I would be gassed in Auschwitz, I don't think I would have tried and did what I did.

I remember helping the whole barrack of us Jewish people-- I say "us Jewish people"-- to have a Hanukkah. Oh, but we don't have candles. Hey, we have rocks. Let's put rocks and one on top and make it like six or seven and pretend it's a candle. This was my way of thinking.

But they didn't think that way, some of them. So how do you explain God? I think Jesus was a wonderful guy. He had some nice things to say.

To some people, he was liked. Some people believe him. Some don't, just like some people believe me. Some don't.

Does that answer your question somewhat? There's no answer, is there?

I think there is no answer is the answer. I guess-- I think it's a very difficult question. And it's a philosophical question in some ways.

Well, I had gone to an opening of a new newspaper office. And I have a Mormon student. And she is the star in the company. She's beautiful. The Catholic priest was there.

And I said, you know Rachel Aspen? He says, oh, yeah. She's Mormon. And I said, she's the star of my company. And you've seen her dance? Oh, yeah, she's beautiful.

But I wouldn't have them join our religious-- different religious groups. I wouldn't have a Mormon on the board-- prejudiced just like that. Boom. See?

I said, coming from you, it's sad. I really told him. I said, coming from you to me, it's sad to hear you say that. What's wrong with Mormons?

There you go. You see, little by little, the Nazis said Jews this, Jews that, Jews this. And pretty soon, everybody started hating Jews, right? So I'm not so sure about religions. Don't hate me for it.

I don't hate you.

I feel that I do God's work more than some of the people that go to church, because I see to it nobody's ever cruel to each other. And sometimes you can win.

Sometimes, a parent will come to me and say, you leave my child alone. But all the time, it's our duty to stop a person in a small way like that. That's where it all begins to breed. Any more questions?

Yeah. I kind of wanted to go back and finish up Auschwitz. We've talked about it a lot. So let me just ask a couple more questions here. Was it possible to obtain special privileges?

Oh, of course.

How did-- how?

Well, I don't know. I didn't get any special privileges. But there were people that had bread and cigarettes and liquor. I don't know. Maybe the women slept with the Nazis. Maybe the men spied. Yes, that was common knowledge.

Actually, it seemed like there was a pretty brisk trade in cigarettes.

What's "a brisk trade in"? What does that mean?

Oh, lots, lots of trading the cigarettes.

Mm-hmm-- piece of meat, bread, butter, special things. Yeah, it went around a lot. But again, I couldn't explain to you what they did for it.

Or how they got--

Or how they got it there. But it was and plenty of it going on.

How did inmates tend to treat each other in general?

Angry sometimes, angry sometimes, just like sisters and brothers in the family fight. They get into fights. And then they apologize.

And then they attack one because she said, you're going in the gas chamber. And they would say, well, that's not true, things like that-- very normal as the people were out of their mind and starved, too starved to move or walk.

It was pretty much like teenagers, like people. But they all come together on the end of the day. And if they had fights or anything, they work it out. But there were some people who disliked each other immensely and never stopped.

Did certain groups tend to stick together and exclude other groups, like, say, the Hungarians and the Greeks and the Poles? Just--

Well, I myself, I never saw this because I never asked anybody, are you a Hungarian Jew? Or are you a Polish Jew? And in many ways, I understood Hungarian, too. So I knew automatically.

But it was-- I don't remember seeing anybody group. Maybe they did. I don't know what the older people did. I would get out of the barracks and play with a cockroach or whatever with a stick. I never stick around that much with people-- so always a loner, so to speak. Can't answer that.

Do you recall musicians?

Oh, yeah.

What do you recall about them?

Violin music, mostly strings and a little place where they always sat and played. Sometimes, they walk around the grounds.

Were they official--

I don't know. What's "official"?

Official camp musicians, like if anyone tells them--

Always the same ones till one or two would be chosen for someplace else-- maybe gas chamber. Then a new one would come in. So they were six people, eight people.

That's the biggest. I never counted them, but it couldn't be more than that in a group. Nazis were always looking for musicians.

What happened to people who got sick that you recall? Were you ever sick?

Yeah. I had colds and infections, shivers. I don't know what sick-- we'd throw up a lot. Yeah. If the Nazis noticed, they just disappeared. If the Nazis-- you don't let anybody know you're sick.

Sometimes, people got sick deliberately, saying they're sick to get to the dispensary or whatever because the better treatment. But the real sick ones, they disappear. They're finished. They're useless.

Did you become friendly with very many people besides Gerta?

No.

And you managed to stay alive without having--

Well, friendly-- I would say that on the contrary, I was very rejecting of people and tried to look for places to be alone.

How easy was that?

It's a matter of walking out the door and sitting on the outside and taking a stick and making a house and living room with a stick, like sketching. But most of the time, I didn't get involved in too much of their conversations.

And they would push me around and say, oh, you're just a kid. Get out of here, things like that. But I said, I'm not a kid. Then they laugh.

There were a couple other women that were nice. But I never showed my needs. I never showed my needs to anyone. I'd cry a lot.

No, I didn't become-- they come and they go. You don't get attached to anybody. They come and they go so fast-- always people disappearing.

Did you ever see any children in the camp besides yourself?

Able-bodied. I don't know how old they were, but there were some little people around in there. But I didn't consider myself a child there, really. I didn't think of myself as a child. I just thought of myself as one of the people doing a job or whatever-- sleeping, eating.

Once in a while, I'd see a child. Yeah. 10 years old and over, nothing-- small ones were never around. They get rid of them-- never, just the able-bodied people.

About how old would be the little people you saw?

It depends. You see, I wasn't that able-bodied. But I kind of looked stronger, looked more adult. I was more developed at 10 than most girls. And I guess I just was good enough to work. I don't know.

But there was a Jewish girl, tall. When I asked her how old she was in 10, she was younger than I was. But she was tall and looked like a woman.

So in there-- at that time, she was younger than I was. I don't remember what age she said she was. But I asked her. And I don't remember what she said. Yeah.

Do you recall any escapes from camp?

Oh, there were rumors all the time trying or people talking how to rebel. They couldn't make it beyond the fence. You just get electrocuted and hang on the fence. No-- always talking about it.

Do you recall the camp canteen or scrip?

Place to eat? In between the beds.

No a camp canteen and scrip, which is basically--

Long tables and lots of us sitting around eating?

What was it? Was that--

Long tables, wooden tables in a room.

In Auschwitz? You mean in the barrack?

Sometimes that. Sometimes we have it in between-- here's the sleeping quarters. Next one is where you eat.

Were you always in that little barrack that used to be a stable?

Yeah, except for work. Yeah, I don't remember any other.

But you were never moved to a different barrack.

I never remember any walls, white or brick, or decent wood on the windows. No.

And you would never moved to a different barrack?

Oh, yeah. I was moved in the female area in there-- never stayed long enough in one barrack. Gerta moved me. So I really can't recall much about it. But I don't remember being in good facilities.

Did you observe any differences between how Jews and non-Jews were treated in Auschwitz?

We were there to die, Jews or non-Jews. There was something wrong with all of us that we were behind those bars. But Jews didn't last long That's the only difference I know.

But any other religions or whatever had to work. When we were marching to Dachau, they were telling us that we're

going to work in the wine country picking grapes and stuff. They did. They did take from Dachau some women to work in Rhine. They did. How long that was-- month or two-- I don't know.

Did you ever travel on public roads where civilians could see how you were treated for any of your work details?

What private roads were? Was all country area. You mean right downtown or something like?

Well, I meant public roads like roads between towns or to go to different places, places where civilians would be traveling or living along?

No.

Do you recall any pregnant women getting past the initial selection?

Didn't even know what pregnant was. The fat women, you mean. They may have been. Yeah. I can't say, because I'd have to ask the person, are you pregnant? And then I'm sure-- they wouldn't save a Jewish child.

Do you recall a black market?

That's the same thing as getting cigarettes and all that stuff.

Yeah. Actually, that's true. Yeah.

Yeah.

What do you think enabled you to survive?

I can explain that now, love of life. But I paid my dues when I came to America emotionally. I was once 22 hours depressed and two hours not.

Now, I'm 22 hours not depressed. And maybe two hours, something will smell, a sound, the woods this morning will depress me. It would bring me down the way I feel drained. I would say that youth is, one, not understanding fully, not having the concept at all what was going on. And the way accepting it is OK. This is life, without a question.

I was blonde-- blue eyes, blonde. Spiritually, I would say I just always knew I was going to live, while other people knew that it was the end of us there. I just somehow didn't feel.

My ballet had a lot to do with it. I just had to do that Sugarplum. It sounds stupid to people. But if you have some kind of a thing you latched onto-- I didn't do anything to try to save myself. I didn't go to great lengths to hide.

If they shoot me, they shoot me. If they don't, they don't. I just didn't think about surviving or dying. I just coped. I would say that.

After I came to America and the emotions that I had to re-educate, I would say that love for life, the beauty of life, the nature, the people-- even the people, as much as I get scared of them and wonder what they do still. The food, the cats-- I like cats, dogs, things in life that are so overwhelmingly beautiful.

And I feel so close to life, so very close to the Earth. And my feelings are so deep about the Moon and the Sun. I never miss a thing. I'm just eating it up.

And I really don't have any great desire to be famous. Or it's like I do some pretty good oil paintings. And I couldn't care less if I'm glorified with it or dance, anything. I don't have this desire for people to clap and make me feel good.

On the contrary, I run from it. Once I do something good, I hide. I don't want to hear from other people. I'm ashamed or

feel embarrassed if there's too much compliment going on. So it's not that.

It's just love for life. Even as bad as it gets sometimes, I really don't ever want to leave this Earth. So it's that.

Do you recall any expressions of humor?

Yeah. The Jewish people just had a way of singing and talking. And somebody got in a fight. They have a way of logically explaining something and making a joke. The jokes-- I wish I could have just written down all the jokes. It's not just jokes.

It's not even a joke. It's the philosophy they used. It's the inspiring word that they used that would just, boom, pick you up like you're 10 feet tall. If two people are fighting, it's just one or two words come out of some woman, Jewish woman, and bang, they'd be hugging.

It's just so-- and a lot of philosophy and laughter. Yeah. There's always this oy, so she did this and things like that. It just was fabulous. And I think that had a great deal to do watching the Jewish dignity.

For me, it had a great deal to do of falling in love with them and their philosophy. Yeah. Down on Catholics again. No.

Do you remember being required to sing while working or marching?

"Heil Hitler."

That was a song.

No, always doing this. And we sang, but I don't remember being ordered-- no-- to sing. Maybe. Maybe they were, and I sang along. I don't know. It's like I said. I was a detached child in there.

How did you know Allied troops were approaching?

Rumors, leaflets, and airplanes over the head a lot.

Did the guards change their behavior?

Yeah. They got meaner. They got meaner. There was no mercy anymore. I never doubted that I'm going to live. But I never thought of living that much, either.

I just went along with it from minute to minute and reacted and acted with it. But everybody became double scared that we were finished. They were really killing.

When you went on your death march, how did they gather together the people to go on that march to Dachau?

Just the same way they got you out of the houses. Rouse. Rouse. Rouse. Get going. Move. March. Go faster. Move. Get.

Non-Jews were included in this?

Everybody that was in camps.

Did you have any idea where you were going?

No.

How many people began the march?



No. As a matter of fact, we were joking and talking that they probably want to walk us to death. That was another way of getting rid of us.

How many people went on this march?

One end to the other, long. You couldn't see the end of people there, and you couldn't see the end of people there. The only thing I could think of is the Nazis and that they were sparse between us, that we could split and kill them, choke them.

But I was afraid of the dogs. So I would always logic out in my head, well, if we split, the dog will get me. And I want to live.

So how much food did they give you?

On the march? They didn't give you any food.

No food?

No, they-- I don't remember getting any food or water. I remember a Jewish man asking for water. And we were near a farmhouse. A Nazi went and got a hose and opened his mouth, turned on the water, and killed them with it. Just the water blew up.

And then the Nazi said, if any of you want water-- oh. No, he said, is there anyone else that would like to have a drink of water? It was just like showing us that don't ask for water.

So no, there were people that had a little bite to eat here on bread, hard bread. But I was always the last one to get the food. The women were so much more aggressive than I was.

And they'd get to the food in the barracks-- in the barracks. But on the march, I don't remember any food or water. No.

What was the weather?

I remember people approached me. I don't know.

You remember--

Cold and slushy. I remember Germans throwing food at us. When we reached Germany, they would come out of the bushes and throw apples, food, raw potatoes. There was one time.

Did the guards react to the people who threw the food at you?

No, they didn't even notice. They were in the back lines. Their backs were turned towards the end of the line, more or less. In the back of us, we could hear the food. And some people escaped. Some people got shot down escaping.

Weather-- I don't know. I can't tell you the weather. Back to the weather again.

Where did you spend the night?

God, what I wouldn't give to know. On the spot. On the spot.

What happened when people died or couldn't keep going?

They just leave them there. Actually, they finish them off, shoot them. The ones that ran, the dogs got them. And then they'd shoot them. Some didn't care anymore. They were so gone that they would run just to be shot.

What would they do with the bodies left along the route? I talked to one survivor, and he said that what would happen is they had a group that would follow behind. And they would collect all the bodies and bury them in a ditch, rather than just leave them. Was that your experience?

No. Clean up the bodies? No. They just left them behind. I don't remember any of that.

But it depends what end you were in. Maybe that's true. I cannot discredit that person because I don't know. I didn't see an end. But if there was an end, maybe that's exactly what happened. So I couldn't vouch for that.

How long were you on the road before you got to Dachau?

I don't know.

You don't know. OK. How many people survived the march compared to how many started? Not numbers, but just a general idea?

Half? I don't know. That's a guess. There's always a group of people. It's always full of people marching.

What did you see people do to survive?

How are you-- what do you mean? On the road?

Yeah. There were times people might fight over food. Or they might do things to survive.

What food? In our group, we never saw any food to fight over. I can't say.

Sometimes, people would be too weak to go on. And their friends would carry them.

Oh, yeah. Well, that's-- carrying people. Yeah, that was a lot. That's a common thing.

Did you ever want to give up?

When I got to America, I tried to commit suicide. But not in Auschwitz and Dachau, no. How can I explain to you? I was so busy coping with everyday stuff, I never realized how serious everything was that was going on.

Every waking moment, even at night, we'd have to be careful what we say, what we do. And you're just alert all day and night. You're just always watching.

So I never gave a thought till I came to America. Then suddenly, it hit me. All the things that I forgot to feel over there hit me here pretty hard.

How did you stop yourself from killing yourself?

Over the Golden Gate Bridge. I thought I told you already. I had my foot up to jump. And I just-- I don't like to talk about it, because people probably think I'm crazy.

But I heard Gerta yelling in my mind. She said, oh, I spent all that time blowing in your mouth and saving your life and making you work and saved your life. Now, you let the Nazis finish you up here. You're going to finish the job for them. And all these thoughts came to my head. And I just didn't do it.

And when I changed, it was ice cold on the bridge, Golden Gate Bridge. It was terrible and wet and cold and foggy. But I felt all this warmth when I changed after I heard Gerta's voice. But it was my mind.

And I felt like I was really enveloped with this white angel. And these huge wings just surrounded me, huge bird, and kept me totally out of wind and everything. I was just warm, comfortable. It's like a feeling like being back in the mother's womb, I think. It was a wonderful moment.

And so I took charge of my life after that. I got psychoenergetic books and started reading how to change my tape up here from the miserable situation, how to accept. First of all, I needed to accept that it happened, not hate it or fight it. And then I needed to separate that the person crossing the street didn't do it to me. The people that did it to me was another country. And I needed to do all that.

When did you make this attempt, about? Was it soon after you came over or several years after or--

I went to-- I don't know. I was all alone. I remember walking the bridge. I remember it was some kind of Easter or-- yeah, it was Easter. All families were together. I remember friends of mine said, I'm going to see my mom this weekend for Easter.

And another person before I went on the bridge said, I'm going to Los Angeles to visit my grandparents. And that hit me very hard. And my daughter then disappeared. And I was all by myself. And I felt that if I killed myself, nobody would claim my body.

Nobody knows me. Nobody would care. And I walked with that feeling. Then I saw cars go by. And I saw cars-- four or five people in a car and a man's family, relatives, holding hands.

And I remember staring at one car because they were all laughing and together, very close. And then I started to do it. I was very determined.

But then this thing happened, this miracle. So I didn't do it. Here I am. Hey.

We can probably stop now. But before we do, I think there's something I need to say, because it was a legitimate question when you asked me did the Jews kill Jesus. And I felt-- and I'm not saying you trapped me, OK? But I felt real trapped by the question, because I know that historically at that time, that was what people said.

And they used it as a justification to kill the Jewish people and to hate them. And so when I felt kind of trapped into saying that Jews killed Jesus or a few Jews killed Jesus, I felt real trapped because I felt like this was going to be heard, especially by survivors, as the same thing as was said back then. And that wasn't at all.

But you could edit it, right?

I don't know. Are we willing to edit that?

Great. Go ahead any time, Yanina.

It must be a significant thing because the Pope made the point of apologizing to the Jews. Do you remember?

I wasn't aware of that. When did that happen?

A few years ago. Look in-- no, listen. If the Pope apologized to the Jews, this was a very significant moment in history a few years ago. Maybe you can trace it that the Pope actually apologized-- the Polish Pope now-- to the Jews for this particular sentence in the Bible or something.

I'm not quite clear on it. But I know it happened. It was on TV. So it must be that Catholics must not feel the guilt of this, because some lunatic Hitler picked up on it and made an issue out of it.

You see? Again, we're back to Dahmer. We're back to Dahmer. Why does he have skulls around? And why is he eating human flesh or has an arm frozen in the refrigerator, whatever the crazy guy does? It's not the Catholics' fault that the

Nazis picked up.

I'm just saying that, why are the Arabs doing what they're doing? It's religion. They believe. And they're Muslims. Do they have to kill Jews? Come on.

Religions-- I'm very discouraged by religions. I believe that the Catholic religion is mythology. And we've gone a long way in our intelligence. But I believe the Jewish religion is more survival religion.

Yeah. I guess all I wanted to do was clarify that I know there's so much emotion in that phrase because of the Holocaust and because of a lot of the persecutions that Jews had to be taken care of happened over the centuries. And it was a phrase that was misused. At the time, it was simply a historical phrase. Jesus was a Jew. He lived in Palestine. He offended a few people who had a lot to lose.

There was more in there. There was more about the vermin.

What?

The Jews being bad. There's more.

But that's not in the Bible. That's how it was misused. And that's what's added-- all I'm saying is that when I felt forced to answer that question, I really didn't want all that baggage that went along with the statement to be included in it, because it's such emotional baggage that has nothing to do with a simple historical fact, which isn't even entirely true, because they weren't allowed to execute people at the time. And so they needed to get the Romans in there to do it.

And so really, if you look at it from a theological standpoint, it's a statement that all men have sinned and killed or you know what I mean, have offended God, whatever. And all men participated in this particular murder. From a theological standpoint, it's not even true to say that just the Jews killed Jesus.

But I just wanted to say that there's none of this emotional baggage, none of this stuff that's attached to it later. I was saying it only as a historical fact, that that's just where they were at the time. Do you understand?

Yeah, just exactly as the Blacks were slaves, that was the way it was. It was time of the slaves then. It was a way of business then. It was a way of life then, air of times. Yeah. It had nothing to do with today. Yeah. I understand. Yeah.

I guess we can quit now. It's just I'm so afraid that there's going to be so much emotional baggage attached to that. And I guess there's nothing more we can do.

OK, Peggy.

No, it's not that I'm afraid the Catholics are going to take it the wrong-- I'm afraid the Jewish people who at the time heard all this stuff based on this one historical situation, that they're going to take it, because it was misused at the time by people who had given that scripture a long time ago.

But then they could use the sentence in a misused sort of way to justify what they wanted to do to the Jewish people, because they needed a scapegoat. So I'm not afraid Catholics are going to take it wrong. I'm afraid the Jewish people are going to hear it wrong and be really hurt, the people who lived through it and who this is a very sensitive question for them.

I hear it entirely differently because of my different historical and theological background and experiential background. But I'm just afraid that the experiences are going to make them feel like this is a prejudiced statement. And I really don't mean it as a prejudiced statement at all.

Oh, you mean your statement, not mine?

Mine. Yeah.

Yeah. Oh, I doubt it. I think they're more intelligent than that. They know this was the issue with the Germans, with the Nazis. And the vermin of the Earth-- the Jews have been suffering for so long. They've always been excluded from society for some reason, way back. So they know their history.

I just felt really bad about that. And it wasn't that you didn't have the perfect right to ask the question. It's that I just knew there was all this emotional stuff behind it because of experiences.

And I knew there was no other way to answer, either. So I just felt like I was really sorry I got into a discussion. That's enough, I guess.

You can bleep it.

Question-- it's just basically, is there anything else you'd like to say before we end this session?

Yeah. I'm glad I'm here to tell it. And all the voices that I hear on and off daily and all the sounds and all the things are revenged.

Revenged?

Revenged by me being able to tell-- maybe not revenge, maybe soothing. I think that the souls of Jews in gas chambers rest better because they know I'm here telling this. And I wish I was born a Jew.

And there's not much more. I feel that it's our duty to squelch prejudice in every corner, in every way. I do it all the time in schools when I make speeches. And I think that we should do everything under the sun to squelch prejudice. That's all I have to say.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.