INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH JOSEPH COLVIN

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Q. Today is July 11, 1990. I am Gene Ayers, interviewing Ken Colvin at the Holocaust Library and Research Center, 639 14th Avenue, San Francisco.

Mr. Colvin, I'll ask you to please start with your full name and spell it, if you would, please.

A. All right. Kenneth, K-E-N-N-E-T-H, middle name Joseph, J-O-S-E-P-H, last name Colvin, C-O-L-V-I-N.

Q. And your date of birth?

A. November 28, 1924.

Q. And where were you born?

A. In San Francisco.

Q. And I believe we can start, see if this fits your pattern to start with your, very briefly, your early life, and however you want to get us into the time when you entered the United States Army.

A. All right. There's a certain continuity to my life that I would have to start at the very early age, and that would be when I was about five or six, in San

Francisco.

And my mother was the first president of the Diaspora in San Francisco. And I remember that I had a little red wagon. And I would go around door-to-door collecting wire hangers. And my mother would sell these, in turn, to the cleaners for a penny a piece. And that's how she earned her donor luncheon money for her Diaspora.

Now, I didn't know what a Diaspora was. And for many years, I didn't know what Zionism was. And I went through the channels of going to the grammar school at Alamo, and then Precidio Junior High School, and then to Lowell, and then one semester at U.C. Berkeley.

Now, along the way, I will say that, that I was very strongly influenced by the Jewish Community Center. I was a member of Hashana Hatzor, which was a Zionist youth group. I was a member of the AZA.

And then there's kind of a blank time in my career of my relationship to Judiasm. At one point, I was kind of confirmed at Temple Beth Israel in San Francisco. And Rabbi Elliot Bernstein was the Rabbi at that time, since deceased.

And the reason I mention his name is because as we go on in this interview, I want to read a letter to you that I wrote to this Rabbi when I was at one of the camps at Ebensee in Bavaria. This thread, this thread that has continued all of my life.

And I am sitting here holding a book that I wrote for, basically, for our seven wonderful grandchildren,

who are in age at this point from one to five. And it's something I wanted to leave them.

I have always written these very long letters to each of our grandchildred as they were born, to be put away, to read when they are, you know, of age.

And then I sat down one day, and I said I am not satisfied with that. There's a message I have to tell our grandchildren. And that message, that message is what I saw and what, what depths that humanity can stoop to, and then tell them what I did about it in my own life.

Now, I have written this 300 page book, because I couldn't tell them enough in a letter. And each of these books are put away for either Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, hoping that they will learn by example, not by a group of rules to live by.

And if I can, if I can just get any, make any indentation in their or impression on their lives, so much the better. There is not a day that has gone by, in 45 years, that, in some way, somehow, that I don't think about the Holocaust.

Q. You were part of a Jewish family as a young man?

A. Yes.

Q. And it sounds as if you were active in Jewish life here in San Francisco as a youth, am I correct?

A. To some degree, and while I was in this confirmation class, I used to have big arguments with Rabbi Bernstein about Zionism, because I --

Q. Were you for or against it?
A. I was against it. I didn't understand it, and so I didn't think that we needed any changes. I was very myopic in my observation of the world at that point.
Q. Zionism in the sense of having a Jewish home life?
A. That's right. That's right.
Q. You saw no need for that?
A. Not at that point.
Q. When you were a teenager?
A. That's right. That's right. But I certainly found a need for it in one question that I asked a Polish Jew, who was in a camp in Ebensee, Austria.

And I said -- you know, the war was over, and I could speak to him with a little background of German and Yiddish. And I asked him, what are you going to do, now that the war is over?

And he said, well, he said, I am from Poland. And I have no home, and I have no family. Everybody has been killed. And the only thing that has kept me alive is Eretz, Israel, a homeland for Jews.

And if anyone ever had a starting point, I can pinpoint my whole life with that answer, Eretz, Israel.
Q. As a young man, and a San Franciscian, and you said Lowell High School, and so you were an educated person. And you were getting all kinds of news here in those days. And you would have been a teenager in the 1930's?
A. Uh-huh.

Q. Were you -- what did your father -- was your father in the home?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. And what did your father do?

A. My father was a furrier, retail furrier in downtown San Francisco.

Q. In San Francisco?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And your mother was --

A. And my mother helped him at the store, and was active in the Temple Sisterhood, and the Diaspora, and other organizations that I only knew the name of.

Q. So were you aware, was your family aware, particularly aware, in those teenage years, of what was happening in Germany? Do you recall that?

A. Not particularly. I used to hear things and read things about what was going on in the states with the brown shirts and the boons, and isolationists, what was his name. I forget is name.

Q. Kaufmann.

A. Yes. What was going on at that time was a terrible depression in the mid 30's that went on to the end of the 30's, beginning of the 40's. And this depression has, in my opinion, a lot to do with what went on in Germany.

Because this madman, Hitler, was able to promise people, in the midst of a terrible depression in Europe, and particularly in Germany at that time, he promised

them bread. And he hypnotized them to an extent that I will never understand how people could have bought that, but it happened. And we know it happened, and that's why we are sitting here today, to be sure that it never happens again.

But it's inconceivable to, to me, as an educated person, if I were to never have heard about the Holocaust, in the weirdest dreams that I might have, to visualize what went on. It's impossible.

Q. As a young man, apparently, you were in the public school system?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And as far as you could tell, the depression in this country left a greater impression on you, and had more to do with your everyday life than perhaps anything happening in Europe or over there. Is that accurate?

A. Yes, yes. It would be, except it started in, in about 1939 or '40, that there was an early draft in the United States. And some of those men -- they were only going to be in for one year. And so they ended up being in for six or seven years.

So we were starting to hear about this. And as a young 16 or 17 year old boy in high school, or starting Cal, my world was very small, soon to be enlarged.

Q. What year did you start Cal?

A. In June of 1942, and I went into the Army, March, 1943. It was a case that my draft number was up, and so a bunch of us went down to the draft board and said okay.

Let's go now. And we dropped out of school, and that's when it started.

Q. You said you began Cal in '42?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And did you say June?

A. In June of '42.

Q. '42. Okay. Now, a moment ago, you mentioned that you were aware, at least tangentially, of activities in this country such as brown shirts, I think you said?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And isolationists, of course, and earlier activities, perhaps in sympathy. Do you recall any of those?

A. Well, there was a good deal of anti-Semitism at that time.

Q. In San Francisco?

A. In San Francisco, all over the United States. It was open. It was rampant, and the Nazi's were having demonstrations, and no one took them seriously, least of all the Whitehouse.

Q. Was there ever anything happening in San Francisco like that that you recall, like Nazi parades or Bund -- It wasn't quite so overtly Nazi, but anti-Semitic and Bund activities?

A. I tell you, there was a reason that I bring this up, and that is that my late brother was applying for a place in the Army. And this was in 1941.

And he had gone to several of the military

branches. And our name, our given name at that time was Cohn, C-O-H-N. And there was no doubt that, that he was being rejected because of his Judiasm.

And so one day, I was -- one night I was told that -- to appear in court the next day with, with my older brother and my other middle brother. And we changed our name to Colvin.

And that was so, that was so, because my brother, my oldest brother, also wanted to go to law school. And there were restrictions and allocations for a limited number of Jews, if any, at the major schools in the country at that time.

So, yes, that had a very big impact on me. Frankly, I have always regretted that my name was changed, because to me it felt like I was hiding.

Q. Your brother, what year was -- was he trying to obtain a commission?

A. Yes.

Q. And he had some college education, I gather?

A. Yes, he was in Stanford Business School. No, he had gone to law school. And, at that point, he was in Stanford Graduate Business School.

Q. What year was that he was trying to obtain --

A. '41.

Q. '41?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Early in the war?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And along that line, do you remember your parents talking, saying there -- you say there was a good deal of anti-Semitism? Did it affect you, or your family, or your parents in any special way, detailed way?

A. It was not what we could do, but what we couldn't do. Some of that still exists in our community today, in private clubs and private golf clubs.

And at that time, all of our family friends were Jewish. And we had a very close family at that point. I had a wonderful grandfather, who had -- every Seder would start -- he had his seven children, and their spouses, and the grandchildren.

And would start off this Seder by saying, when I arrived at Ellis Island, I had an apple and a jackknife. And he would hold his arms up gloriously, and say everything from then on was profit.

Now, this is why I wrote this book, because I wanted to tell our grandchildren what a wonderful country we live in, despite prejudice, despite limited opportunities. It's all out there. You can go out and make your own way.

And you can also do other things than just earn money, or do things in your own profession, or whatever. It's a strange, a strange phenomenon that happened to me, that because of a Holocaust, and because of what I got involved in after the Holocaust, in my adult life, that it's given me a third dimension of living, to know that, in some way, some small little way, you can still help in

the world.

Q. You mentioned a grandfather who came to Ellis Island, a paternal grandfather?

A. Paternal grandfather. In fact, all four of my grandparents came over in the early 1890's. And they, they made it. They didn't have anyone there at the dock to meet them. They didn't have an apartment waiting for them or --

Q. Where did they come from?

A. They all four came from an area in Poland that vacillated between Poland and Russia, in what they call the Kolisky, Kolisky District. (Phoenetic)

And my grandfather arrived here. The man at immigration found it very hard to write Kolisky, so he wrote Cohn. So that is how we started off with a name that wasn't or original family name.

Q. What was your original family name, Cohn? No Kolisky?

A. Well, it was Kolisky, because my understanding is that they took the name of the village. Now, his first name was George or Gersin, and he would call himself George Kolisky. And last names didn't seem to, to be that important.

Q. This area in Poland where they were from was near what? What is the largest city around, if you can --

A. It's in southern Poland. I am not sure of the geography there. Perhaps they went back there after, in about 1927, and the stories that I heard and the

testimonials that I have gathered from them, their whole family was living in poverty.

And after the war, we never heard any more about them. And we just have to conclude that they were all wiped out.

Q. Near the Czechoslovakian border, somewhere down there?

A. It could have been down that far, yes.

Q. So your four grandparents, in the '90's, 1890's, came. And you didn't know, of course, that two of them were going to be here. Your parents met here, I guess?

A. Yes.

Q. Or came to Ellis Island, and then when did your family make its way to the West Coast?

A. Early on. I would say it was before the turn of the century, because my father was born in New York, and my mother in San Francisco, and that would have been around 1896, '98.

Q. And your parents met out here?

A. They met here at a Purim dance, and I am very glad they met.

Q. So you went through your normal youth here as a teenager growing up in the the lucky city of San Francisco.

And then along about 1939 and '40, things began to happen, and on the worldwide scene. You got into Cal in June of '42?

A. Right.

Q. You said. And meanwhile, this country had gotten into war?

A. That's right.

Q. And at that point, the German Army had pretty nearly overrun all of Europe. And were you particularly attuned to that, at college age? There are many things going on, and a lot of times, at that age, you don't necessarily pay too much attention to what's happening on the other side of the world, do you?

A. Yeah. I would say that's true, except that with the exception that I started then having friends at college who, who were drafted. Who were called in to the Army Reserve Corps. And four of them that I knew were killed during the war. And it started to bring it to home very fast.

And I knew that I was going in one of these days. And when I finally went in, in the beginning of March, '43, I was 18 plus a few months, and very green behind the ears.

Q. Did you say your draft number came up; is that what compelled you?

A. My draft number was going to come up, and we just -- the few friends we had at that point, we all decided, you know, let's go. And so the coincidence was that my oldest brother and I went to Fort Ord, in Monterey, on the same train, the same morning, leaving our parents at the Third and Townsend. And my other brother Lenny was already in Dutch Harbor in the Seabees.

So my mother had the three stars in a window.
Q. Did you have any other sons or daughters?
A. No, there were just three boys in our family.
Q. And at that point, you were all in the armed services?
A. Yes.
Q. And you and your brother enlisted in the Army?
A. My older brother Renny was in the Enlisted Reserve Corps., and just by coincidence we left on the same train.
Q. Did it occur, he tried, you said, to get a commission?
A. Yes.
Q. And you feel he was rejected because of his Jewish background?
A. He felt that.
Q. He felt that?
A. Yeah. And made the decision autonomously for the three of us. Our parents did not change their name.
Q. Is that right? So the three of you, including the Seabee?
A. Yes.
Q. All entered the service with the name of Colvin?
A. That's right.
Q. Then here you are on your way to Fort Ord, and your brother is on the same train?
A. Yes.
Q. And you are an enlisted man?

A. Yes.
Q. You are sworn in before you get there?
A. Yes.
Q. Before you left Third and Townsend?
A. That's right.
Q. So you are in the Army now?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. And once there, did you encounter anything at all that would lead you to think that there was anti-semitism in basic training or any sort of training that you underwent at this stage?
A. No.
Q. Colvin is not a Jewish name?
A. Well, I didn't hide the fact that I was Jewish, and I went to services on Friday nights, in basic training, and I never concealed my Judaism nor have I ever.
Q. You were just one of many there, and there were other Jews, of course, all around you?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. At this point, were you -- now we are into 1943?
A. Right.
Q. And you are in basic training in the Army. You don't have time for much else, but were you aware, at this point, of Hitler's design for the Jewish people in Europe? By this time, the concentration camps had been built, and people had long since been sent there?
A. To my memory, I don't recall that we knew about

this in '43. Maybe the word was out, and I have since heard that there were messengers that got out and even went to see President Roosevelt.

Q. How about things, your recollections of whether or not you recall things in Germany itself, where there were laws being passed. There were news stories about what was happening, Kristallnacht?

A. I remember about Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938. And I remember hearing about that, but all of this --

Q. You were 14?

A. Pardon?

Q. You were 14 then?

A. Yes. All of this didn't seem real yet to a young kid in San Francisco.

Q. Do you recall your dad or your mom saying to you this is what's happening to the Jews in Germany, or this is what this man did, any comment like that?

A. Not strongly, not strongly. We lived with this, so it wasn't, it wasn't an announcement that came across the dining room table. And it was -- I think my father was very conscious of his Judaism. And he was not a great Zionist.

My mother, on the other hand, was a Zionist, and this rubbed off on me years later.

Q. What sort of family was it, whether an orthodox, or conservative, or reformed?

A. Conservative to reformed.

Q. Somewhere in there?

A. Somewhere in there. That's correct. We actually went to Beth Israel, which was conservative, who have since combined with Temple Isaiah in Wood Lake, Daly City.

Q. And once in the Army, there were services available?

A. Yes, on Friday nights.

Q. And you went to those?

A. Yes.

Q. You still managed to be a practicing and take part in Jewish activities in the Army?

A. That's right.

Q. Yeah. Fort Ord is a place where you got basic training?

A. That's right.

Q. And how long were you there. How did you finally get into where you settled into in the Army?

A. At Fort Ord, it was mostly classification testing and some basic training. And originally, I was classified as an Air Corps gunner, tail gunner and mechanic.

And I was shipped over off to Fresno, and went through basic training, during the summer of '43, at the very hot fairgrounds in Fresno. And I don't know how it happened, but I started getting involved with the dispensary, in our basic training camp there, and started helping the doctors do some work there. And it's all very vague how I got started, but I was very interested

in it.

We were at Fresno for a few months for basic training, and then we were given a test by the Army. And it was for the ASTP, Army specialized training program. And I was sent to Stanford for more classification tests, and developed a very close friendship with a man named Bernard Fredkin from San Jose. Who we have remained very, very close for the last 45 or 50 years.

We were then sent to University of Cincinnati, where I had a years training in the ASTP studying engineering. And just about that time, at the end of the year, in late '44, probably in the fall of '44, is when the Battle of the Bulge took place.

Q. Christmas '44?

A. Christmas of '44, and then just wiped out the whole program. We were supposed to go through and get our engineering degrees, and be commissioned and all, and so it was just wiped out.

And I was sent to one camp and reclassified and ended up with the 515th medical clearing company at Camp Breckonridge, Kentucky. Because I put down that I was in premed at the University of California for one quarter.

At that time, it was obvious to them that I was -- I would qualify to be a medic. So I had a very good instincts and felt very comfortable being a surgical technician, where I had gone through training at one of the camps in Indiana or something. And we used to practice surgery on dogs and animals. And they were

treated very humanely, and just as humans would have been treated.

And at that point, we left to go overseas from New York. And this was in January of '45. It took about three weeks to get over to, to La Havre, because we were in a convoy, and we went zigzagging across the ocean. And it wasn't very much fun.

Q. Did you travel well on the sea?

A. I do now, but not sleeping up on the fourth bunk right under -- the air conditioner was about three inches from my head.

Q. How many were you on the ship?

A. On the ship, I don't know.

Q. It was a military transport?

A. It was a military transport.

Q. And you were sleeping four deep in bunks?

A. Yes, and I was down in D deck, which is A, B, C, D, and that's where I was. We were supposed to -- as a medical clearing company, we were supposed to be second in line of evacuation. At the front line, you have an aide man, going to a medical detachment, to an Army infantry or infantry on whatever.

And then we would send the patients back to the medical clearing company. This was all tactwise. And we were supposed to classify them right there, and either give them more attention, or send them back to evacuation hospital.

And then from there they would go to a general

hospital or back to the states. So just, just in the series of evacuation, we were supposed to be number two.

Q. So a corpsman would be with the infantry?

A. Yeah.

Q. Or whatever fighting unit was there, and you would be one step behind that, which might well be, correct me if I am wrong --

A. Pretty close.

Q. Three or 400 yards?

A. Well, maybe a half mile back.

Q. Well within artillery range, of course?

A. Yes.

Q. And that was the way things were set up, on paper at least, for it to be?

A. That's the way.

Q. Yeah. Then when did you join your unit that was in action, or how long was it after you left La Havre before you joined a unit that was in action?

A. It was about two months, about two months.

Q. What was that unit, or where did you join them?

A. We stayed in the same 515th medical clearing company that I stayed with all during my overseas experiences. And we had no idea what was waiting for us. This was an experience that, in retrospect, has stayed with me every day and influenced my life, and the life of my own family, very -- to a great degree.

Q. Now, this experience, are you talking about when you joined the group that was in combat, or are you

talking about --

A. We didn't go into combat. What we did, as a clearing company, we were assigned to the Third Army. And we were -- our goal was to go into the camps as they were liberated, within the first few days, if not the first day, the second day, and go in and set up emergency medical treatment, which is very difficult to talk about to this day, but I want to.

Q. So you were assigned to the Third Army, and a medical clearing company would probably provide support for an entire division, or a regiment or --

A. It would, but we weren't attached to --

Q. I understand.

A. We were a loner. And we got our orders directly from Third Army to go to this camp, and you get set up with your emergency dispensaries and all that, and treat them, whatever you could do.

And then after a few weeks, you would move on to another camp. And so it was one right after another. And these, these were mostly satellite camps of the major concentration camps that we went into.

Q. But your particular job in the company was what?

A. Medical technician, surgical technician.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And I was -- that was still probably before I was 19.

Q. And you had to have medical training back in the states?

A. Be that as it may.

Q. The kind the Army would give you, several months perhaps?

A. No, not several months, no.

Q. You had been premed at Cal, but that showed more of an inclination of what you wanted to be?

A. That's right.

Q. Than what you could be. So you were attached to the Third Army. You knew that they were going to certain areas, or I presume you knew?

A. The southern area.

Q. Yes. Were you told that your area might include the subcamp of Mauthausen or any other?

A. We didn't know.

Q. You didn't know anything about that?

A. We didn't know anything until we rode into the first camp at Hemar, Germany. H-E-M-A-R.

Q. And where is that located about?

A. That was somewheres near Regensburg, I believe.

Q. And what was your experience there? It had been liberated, of course?

A. Well, it had been liberated. And these people were now called D.P.'s, displaced persons. And this was a camp that they had a big problem, that they couldn't let the liberated prisoners run amuck.

So they still had guards at the front gate to keep them in. And we would go in every morning and work very long hours. And the first impression of walking in, and

probably will remain with me forever.

First I want to clarify one point. That people in my position in the Army, who went into these camps, were called liberators. And I will refer to this later, because I, at one time, went to a liberators conference in Washington several years ago.

The word liberator is absolutely repulsive to me. Because if anything, that took away any glory that might be placed on, on other people's shoulders and would detract from the condition and the respect that I have for these people, the Krieggies, as they called them, who were liberated.

You know, it's a situation that where you would say, well, you know, everybody has heard about this. But I am somebody who saw it. And so I have always referred to myself as a person who was a -- I am choking up a little bit -- who witnessed the camps, and that what I will always be is a witness.

And we walked in, and we saw -- it was all men in this camp, and there were piles of naked bodies. The stench in the air from the burning of the bodies, where the smoke was being spewed over the whole side of the country there, that these people died. They were, they were stacked up like, like wood next to a fireplace and to go into the incinerator or the crematorium.

And these people were there, and you couldn't really see a person. There were bones, and it was -- their eyes were recessed, and it was like they had no

eyes. I can never distinguish a body.

And they had open pits where, where they were starting to bury them instead of burning them. And it was just a horrible experience, and it still is.

People have asked me about, you know, how did I feel? And I have to tell them, that I didn't feel. And later, when I talk about this conference, in Washington, you couldn't feel. Because if you did, you would just blowup. I mean, you would pass out.

You couldn't start to have sympathy for Jews who who were dead, who were starved, who were beaten, and thrown about as dirt in the world. You couldn't feel. I can feel it today. But I didn't then.

What we did was to go in and start delousing them with DDT. And it was so degradating to us and to them, in particular, that they would have to get undressed in front of us. And we would squirt DDT powder all up and down their body, and then we did it to ourselves, because at that time, DDT was supposed to kill everything. And years later, we hear it was a carcinogenic, so it couldn't have done us too much good.

Q. Was this a work camp?

A. This was a work, work camp, yeah.

Q. And you were there a day or two, I gather?

A. After it was liberated. That's right.

Q. After it was liberated. And there were American guards to keep the people in one place?

A. Yes.

Q. So that you could go in there and attend to them medically; is that right?

A. Yeah. And we had a hundred men. We had a hundred men in our company. That included about eight doctors, two dentists, two administrative medical officers. And there were only about 12 or 15 of us enlisted men who attended to them.

And we would set up emergency medical treatment. And we, I remember we confiscated or appropriated a house, just down the street from this hill, where you go up to the camp. And one of the days while we were there, these prisoners broke -- these liberated prisoners broke through the gate. And there was a little farm house right across the street from where our villa was, and there was a pig outside.

And they ran down, maybe 50 or 75 of them, and they encircled this pig, and they tore it apart with their hands. And they hadn't -- you know, I mean, obviously, they had a pretty tough diet up to then. And they -- all that was left was just a little blood on the ground. And I saw men in the camp who were liberated drinking out of mud puddles that had been caused by rain. This is just inhumane. It was --

Q. Was there disease there?

A. Lots. Lots of disease.

Q. Typhus, perhaps?

A. We worked with patients who had typhus, who had temperatures that went up beyond 105, six, seven. And

one man told me there that the Germans, the Gerries, the Nazi's, whatever you call them -- I have worse names than that for them. That they had -- they found a new cure for typhus. And I said, "What is it?" He said the crematoria. He said before you die, they just throw them in.

Q. Do you know what sort of work they were doing there at this place?

A. No, I didn't. I didn't, because we -- it wasn't until we got to Ebensee that I really got involved more on a person-to-person basis.

Q. Do you know whether most of these people were Jews?

A. They were in that camp.

Q. They were?

A. Yeah. Some of the other camps --

Q. Do you know where they had come from?

A. Yeah, Poland, Germany. You see, in Poland, they lost four and a half million Jews. And the million and a half, in the overall six million, there were still a million and a half children that were killed during the war.

Q. Were these -- you said all men, I think?

A. In this camp was all men.

Q. Where there children?

A. I didn't see any children.

Q. This was a work camp, and clear these people hadn't had an adequate diet. There were skeletons you

said?

A. Yeah.

Q. What had caused most of these deaths that you were able to ascertain?

A. Starvation, TV's.

Q. They either were burying them or cremating them?

A. No. When they died, they burned them, or they would -- when we got there, then we had, we had duties to supervise some of the German soldiers to dig the ditches and the common burial graves, and give these people some last rights.

Q. Any idea how many persons there were there?

A. No, but I can refer to this book that I have written, if you will allow me, because there is a --

Q. In a rough way, hundreds, thousands?

A. Oh, I would say there were probably, in each one of these camps we went into, 10 to 20,000 people. And the frustration, frustration was being able to give them attention and give them medical treatment was impossible, just impossible. It was too overwhelming. And at the same time, all of us just ate our emotions and did the best we could.

Q. After you arrived there, they continued to die?

A. Yeah, they were dying. They were dying at the -- before we got there, and I have, in this reference book that I have written, a -- they estimated a hundred to a hundred and 50 were dying every day. And that number gradually decreased as we were there and started giving

them food, which was a very difficult problem.

Because the food that they -- that we were giving them was too rich, and then they had more stomach problems. And you wanted to give them anything you had.

Q. There was a good reason for not letting them simply go free, wasn't there?

A. Absolutely. They would have gone into the cities or villages around where each of these camps was, and they would have just ravaged the place.

Q. Plus carry the disease, in some cases?

A. I don't -- I didn't worry about that. That didn't even enter my mind.

Q. As a medical person, a little older perhaps, you might?

A. I am sure it would, but not at that time.

Q. What ultimately -- you went on to other camps, I gather?

A. Yes.

Q. But you may know what ultimately became of them. Were they basically sent to D.P. camp someplace?

A. Well, each of these camps was being established as displaced persons camps. They just turned the -- used a different word than saying prisoners. And what happened to them after we left is -- in piecing this all together, is that the U.S. Army went in, and the Red Cross went in, and the Joint Distribution Committee went in, and helped either send them back to their homes or get them to Palestine at that time.

Q. You say your impression is that most of these people were Jews?
A. Yes.
Q. Or virtually all of them?
A. Not in all of the camps, this one, this one was. In Ebansee, that's where I had most of my experience in the camps.
Q. This was about, what time, when would you have gone to this place? Do you recall roughly?
A. Yes, I --
Q. Probably April, March or April of 1945?
A. That's right.
Q. About when the liberating was occurring then?
A. Yes.
Q. And in all, there were -- how many such camps did you get to?
A. Well, we went to about eight of the camps, labor camps. And we would spend two to three weeks initially getting them started and then moving on.
Q. Can you remember some of the other names?
A. Yes, if I could refer to our -- to the schedule that we had.
Q. You called them Krieggies?
A. Krieggies, as I remember, was a word for prisoner, in the Army. I think the name of the war was Krieg, wasn't it? I am not sure of that.
Q. Blitz Krieg?
A. Blitz Krieg, whatever. But they were referred

to -- yeah, this is a report that I have included from the history of our company, and I will just pick out the places that we worked.

Q. Just locate them in a general way, if you remember.

A. Well, they have the Army map referenced. And this was, oh, in Southern Germany and Bavaria, all down in that area. One was Oberhausen, in Germany, Ranshofen, (phoenetic) in Austria, that was near the Danube. Ultmunster, (phoenetic) which was the little town next to Ebensee, and Holenfeldz, (phoenetic) which was down in the same area.

And I think from then on, it was just getting back and -- at the point we were on a ship coming home from Marseilles, in September, I think it was September of '45, the war in the Pacific was over, and we were on our way to the Pacific. And it was over, and I remember the ship just turning around and how relieved we were.

Q. When you were at -- did you say Hemar? Is that the way you pronounce it?

A. Yes.

Q. The war was still going on?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And were you at several other of the camps, while the war was still going on?

A. Yes. Yeah, in all of these, it was well behind the lines. And what happened at these camps is that, as the Americans were, or English or whoever was liberating

the camps, the Germans would flee. The guards would flee. And some of them they didn't get out in time.

Q. The guards had fled at Hemar?

A. Uh-huh. There was also a hospital at Hemar that we worked in that was just in horrible condition.

Q. In what way?

A. In cleanliness, lack of food, lack of decent food, and why they put some of these people in a hospital, I will never know. Because that wasn't their real style. But part of our outfit was working in the hospital there.

Q. Were all of the camps work camps in the same sense? They had tasks or duties to do. Were any of them, to your knowledge, have any other specialized purpose?

A. No. They, they were work camps, where they would work the Jews as well as the non-Jews. As I said before, there were six million Jews that were killed in the war, and there were also six million non-Jews. And I have as much respect for them as the Jews.

Q. In all the camps you went to, was most of the work force Jewish, would you say?

A. Depending on the makeup of the camp. It was a combination I am sure.

Q. Yeah.

A. I don't think they discriminated at that last point.

Q. Then you were changing locales about every three weeks during this period of time?

A. That's right.

Q. And what stands out as perhaps the worst place, the most horrible place that you can remember, if you can recall?

A. Yes. This would be at Ebensee, in Austria or Bavaria, which was a work camp. It was a subcamp of Nordhausen, which was, which was the final solution camp.

But those that could still work, they sent to Ebensee. They worked down in a tunnel, about a half a mile from the camp. Every day, there they were making arms and ammunition for the Germans.

And they would work 12 hour shifts, and then the next shift would come on. And their food rations were nil. And the barbaric treatment they received, in one sense, I guess it was because the guards knew that they had an endless supply of machines known as human beings, and when one of them wore out, they would just send them to the infirmary or to the crematoria. And there was no sense of human beings, of two human beings. One was a human, a guard, and the other was a piece of dirt. And when he died, didn't make any difference. They had more people they would send in to work.

Q. What did you find when you arrived there? The guards had gone already again?

A. Yeah, the guards were gone.

Q. Were these Austrian guards, or what were they?

A. They were SS. To my knowledge, all of these guards were SS. When we went in there, it was the same

scene as all of the other labor camps, piles of bodies up to the top of this room. The crematorium was still blowing out the smoke of our brothers and sisters, and mother's and fathers, and children.

Q. Was Ebensee not all men I gather?

A. The part that we were in was all men. And I was assigned, at that time, two jobs. One, I worked in an infirmary that we set up in one of the, one of the officer's buildings of the Nazi's.

And the other, most of the time I spent in a TB ward. And I will describe that ward to you. They gave me a mask and some rubber gloves, and here was a whole room full of barracks, of bunks that were three or four high. And they were made out of wood.

There was no mattress for them to sleep on, to lay on, and there were three men in each bunk and one thin blanket. And that's all there was.

At the very beginning, we were just feeding them gruel, that you just scoop, dish out, and then as we got going.

Q. That was all their stomachs could handle?

A. Yeah. Then we started later giving them something better. But I still, I still didn't want to feel. There were times that I did feel then. And two things stand out in my memory at that point.

One of them was a letter that I wrote to Rabbi Bernstein in San Francisco. And the other was a testimonial that I -- there was one man from Greece. His

name was Niso. That's all I remember, N-I-S-O. And he could speak English.

He was the only man out of -- there were probably 150 men in this, in this barracks, all with TB, and dysentery, and what have you, and typhus.

And this one man could speak English. And he was a little more active than everyone else. He was able to get up out of the bunk. And he told me -- he asked me where I was from. And I said San Francisco.

And he said, he said, "My God." He said, "That's near Vallejo," which, of course, is Vallejo. And he said I have relatives in Vallejo. And their name is a Abrauf (phoenetic). And about a year before that date, I had been in fraternity at Cal rooming with this man's second cousin. It was, it was pretty shaking.

Q. Did he survive?

A. I don't know. I will tell you, I will tell you a story about him. First, if I may, could I read a testimonial that he, that he wrote for me?

All right. I am going to read this to you as I wrote it in this book for our grandchildren, and those who succeed them.

Testimony fo the Greek prisoner, Niso. Before I start copying the following story written for me by a man I consider a friend, I would like to preface this by a short introduction.

We are now working at one of the Master Mind's famous stalags, at Ebensee, Austria. We have been at

three or four other stalags in Germany and Austria, but according to the stories the liberated prisoners tell us, this a the jumping off point for all those who were at the end of their line.

When we arrived the men were in a sad state of affairs. However, that does not infer that because the Americans have taken good care of the hundreds of malnutrition cases, that they have recovered completely from the life of starvation and mistreatment for periods of up to six years. The following is a story which is a typical case.

This man, 29 years old, was a prosperous lawyer in Athens, Greece. Obviously, he was a well learned man, speaking seven languages. His English is rather broken, but I will copy his story as he has written it.

When we arrived, Niso was a human skeleton. Our medical officer predicted that he wouldn't last very long. But after talking to him and hearing his will and determination to live, we are certain that nothing will kill him. I have never seen a man alive and still as thin as he was.

We Americans can hardly comprehend their conditions. But I have seen it. Let me so tell you his story. This is a letter that I wrote to my parents, and enclosed his testimony.

My story, like the story of many other thousands of political prisoners in German concentration camps, this is difficult to be told, as to be written, for the

things and happenings we have had in these vernichtenlagern, that is these camps of annihilation, are above all imagination.

When I was taken by the Germans, I was packed up in the railway wagon of these that are used for horses. We were in it 70 persons, women, children, old and young people without place to seat and food for only five days. It was in July. The weather was fairly warm, and there were only two little windoes that allowed the warmth to come but no air.

In such conditions, from Greece, we traveled in these close wagons 14 days, through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, until we arrived at a point between Germany and Poland called Auschwitz. There lay one of the biggest concentration camps of the Germans, with thousands and thousands of all nationalities and religions, Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Czechoslovakians, Greeks, Yugoslavs, and naturally lots of Jews.

When we came out from the railway, only in our wagon from the suffering of travel, only 47 out of 70 were alive. The others were dead during the travel.

Coming out of the train, there was a selection made by a German SS medical officer. He separated the young, and the good for work from the others, older, weak. I was put together with a column of young men, separated from our mothers, sisters, parents, and we were closed in a wooden barracks, more than 800.

We lived there without working, with food just enough for not starving, enduring the cold, the beating of the SS, staying out in the rain almost naked. For as clothing, we had only a trouser and jacket, no shirt, no underwear, rotten shoes.

One day comes a commissioner and chooses a party of 1,000 men to go to work in a coal mine 80 kilometers from the place. I was also chosen. Then began the most terrible part of my sufferings.

Fancy a man that does not know what is in mind, and from one day to the other to be sent 600 meters to dig for cole. The work was terribly hard, little food, and much danger and much mortality.

I worked in the mine shaft from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., and made the life four months. And I may say it took the life out of me. I became skinny, yellow, and always going to be ill. Then I also had a double pneumonia.

They sent me to, sent me nearly to a better world. I wonder also today how I managed to get out of it. I was in the hospital more than a month, recovering with fever and wishing more than ever to die for putting me to an end to my suffering.

One day, my fever when away. The German doctor did not wait a single day. He sent me out of the hospital barracks, immediately back to work. I was so weak, so skinny, I couldn't even go. The result was that three days later, a complication came, and I was back in

the hospital.

I remained another 15 days, but before I was well, there was an evaluation of the camp. The Russians were advancing, and we had to move. The travel lasted six days through Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, until Austria.

It was in January, 1945, with heavy snow. And they had us packed in open railway wagons, 100 people in each car. It was the most terrible thing a man had seen. I cannot that write. It is too difficult. Just fancy that we were sitting under the dead, surrounded by dead comrades. Nobody cared. We were completely like beasts, starving and freezing.

In those six days, of the original party that went away of the 2,500, only 1,200 arrived, and in what condition. So I arrived at Ebansee. The other camps were already bad enough, but I had no idea of what the camp at Ebensee was.

In the first place, we made a period of two weeks of quarantine. When that was over, they sent us to work. To work in Ebensee means nearly death. It was snowing continuously, and we were nearly naked, dressed with a pair of striped trousers and striped jacket.

Somebody had a shirt, but the many had nothing on the body. And to work 12 hours a day, in the snow and the cold nearly without food, the proportion of dead was terrible and increasing every day. The crematorium had every day more work to do, more corpses to burn.

I got ill and was recovered in the hospital. This saved my life, for it made me pass two days of the hardest, two of the hardest months of winter indoors.

In April, I went back to work. We were all hearing already of the progress of the American and Russian Armies, and I took the resolution to make all I could to resist until liberation. I was thinking that it would be a pitty, after all I had endured, to lose my life in the last moment.

A week before the Americans entered Ebensee, I was back in the hospital ill. There it was, overcrowded. I had to lay in the earth. And in a week, I was nearly to death point.

But when the Americans came, it was a nice day. What they did for us, you know that better than everybody else. But what they did for me was simply astonishing. They made a live man out of a dead man. From here on, you can go on with this story alone, for you were the best eyewitness of it.

Those few, those few lines are written so without care, due to my physical situation, and give only a faint idea of what, what was my life in camp. But the day will come when I shall have the occasion to meet you in civilian life, and I will better tell my story. Ebensee, Austria, May 29, 1945.

Q. And you never knew whether he survived?

A. There's two more things about him, When our company was called to move, we -- the notice came

through, and I was in the room with Niso and all of the other patients.

And one of my friends in my company came in and said, "Ken, go outside, get on the truck. We are moving out." And I just turned around and started to walk out. And he called to me, and he said, "Kenneth," he says, "you just can't leave me like this."

And that's when I knew I started to feel. I couldn't answer him. Years later, my wife and I were in Athens, and we had gotten, through his family in Vallejo, we had gotten known numbers of some of his relatives. And I called one of them, and I said, "I am trying to locate Niso." And he said, "I am sorry." He said, "he never made it through the war."

Q. He never -- you just didn't know what had happened to him?

A. I know what happened to him. These men were so emaciated, that any possibility of their living longer, let alone to reach that day, but going through -- and it's interesting. There are three men in the San Francisco area that were in that camp that are now here that I am friendly with. And I have talked to them. And I have gotten a lot more information about Ebensee from them.

Q. Was he Jewish; do you know?

A. He was Jewish, yes, so far.

Q. And you abruptly were taken out of Ebensee?

A. Yes.

Q. What, if you know, what happened to those prisoners who remained? Was there another unit relieved you?

A. Yeah, other units in -- and why they kept moving us, I will never know, because this was the Army. And they had their own reasons. What happened to those people, I found out from these three people in San Francisco who were inmates at that, at Ebensee. And the Joint Distribution came in and tried to help them.

Q. That's the Jewish organization?

A. Yes, the JDC, yes. I started to feel at that point. That was the last camp that we worked in. And I wrote a letter to my old Rabbi, which I would like to read to you, at which point, I probably can't find. I think it's here. I can't find it right now, but I can tell you what it said.

Q. Go ahead.

A. I wrote to Rabbi Bernstein. And I told him, we were living in this little summer resort in Ultmunster, phoenetic. And I said to him that I know that I was very argumentative about a homeland for the Jews when I was a younger boy, and described to him what I saw in the camps. That it was almost -- it was incredible, and how horrible things were, and that if there is anything I can do in my life to help create a homeland now for Jews, I was going to dedicate my life to do it.

And I found out later that he read that to his congregation, and someone kept that letter. And a man

named Lou Stein, who was the executive director of Israel Bond organization, and I was chairman in my later years. And I had a 50th birthday party. And he got up and read that letter. And it was very emotional for me, as it is today.

Q. Thirty days passed since you had written it, or 30 years.

A. He had the original. He had the original letter in his hand, and it was pretty tough to take.

Q. You left there, and by the way, what was your brother doing during these, during this time when you were in this medical company, and what happened to him? Did he get assigned to do what?

A. My oldest brother was at Fort Warren, if that was the name, in Utah. And he was on his way to Lucias, and he received a medical discharge. He had a very serious problem which later caused his death.

Q. And your brother?

A. And my brother in the Seabees went from Dutch Harbor down to Saiban, Saipan, and a few other islands in the Pacific.

Q. He made it through?

A. He made it through.

Q. When you left Ebensee then, what happened to you up until the time you left that area and came back to the United States?

A. After that, we were sent to an R and R camp someplace, and then ended up in Marseilles, because we

were, as I said before, we were going to be redeployed to the South Pacific.

Q. R and R is rest and recreation?

A. Rest and recreation, yes.

Q. And you were on a ship headed for the South Pacific?

A. That's right. That's right.

Q. And --

A. Very unfortunate thing happened the day that we left for the South Pacific. We had one medical officer and one dental officer who were Nissis, American Japanese born. And they called them out in front of all of us and told them they couldn't go to the Pacific, because it was a security risk. And it was -- I said to myself that there is no end to discrimination. It was horrible.

Q. They sent you to Germany?

A. Uh-huh, but they couldn't send them.

Q. Couldn't send them?

A. These men were, these men were beautiful. One was a Terman Fellow at Stanford, where he was a genius. And they followed his life all the way for the rest of his life. There was a psychological study.

Q. When he returned to this country, I think you said the ship was an Army?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. How far had you proceeded toward Japan or the Far East?

A. We were out about three days, when the loudspeaker

came on and said that we were going back to the states. As the boat turned, we could -- I followed the shadows just changing right across the boat.

And all of the sudden, within 10 minutes, there was more alcohol on the decks that everybody had had in their duffel bags, and it was a very thrilling experience.

Q. You were starting to go through the Suez Canal and go that way, and you turned around and headed back?

A. That's right.

Q. And were you aware that the atomic bomb had fallen on Hiro Jima?

A. We had heard that. We heard that. Yeah, we got that news.

Q. Then you were in Germany overall or in -- yeah, in Germany about how long?

A. I would say it was about 10 months.

Q. Ten months?

A. Ten months. And you mentioned something before, when we left, and I don't want to be trite about the choice of words. Because I have, this has always stayed with me. That you can, you can visit, and you can work in a D.P. camp, but you will never leave it. Never.

Q. You brought it back with you of course?

A. Still have.

Q. I mean, how long does it take you to get back into civilian life in this country?

A. I was stationed at Camp Beale in Marysville for a

few months, and then I was discharged. And that's, during the time I was in Europe and also there, I had been taking a correspondence course to be an insurance broker, to go to work for one of my uncles. And so I came home, and had a two weeks vacation in someplace, and then went right to work.

Q. This would be in?

A. In '46.

Q. '46.

A. Uh-huh. January, February, January, '46.

Q. And you were separated from the Army then in late '45, perhaps?

A. Beginning of January, '46.

Q. Uh-huh. You said you had been -- this has affected you and caused you to work in, in various causes every since. Why don't you describe some of those that you have been doing?

A. All right. I found I saw the cost of being a Jew, and I saw what these people had to go through, because they were Jews. And the one man who told me that the only thing that kept him alive was Eretz Israel, a homeland for Jews in Israel.

For about 10 years, after I got home, I didn't -- nothing touched me, except, with the exception of the declaration of independent by the State of Israel. And we attended a giant meeting at the opra house the night after the State of Israel was declared.

And I started to think about this thing a little

more. I would say it was about 10 to 15 years after the war that it hit me and got to my emotions. And I, I was a very upset man.

Q. Were you active in Gangalis (phoenetic) after the war?

A. Not at that time or minimally. Minimally, because we had three children in the early 50's. And yes, I was involved with our Temple or something, but not to a great degree.

And then in about 1959, '50 to -- somewheres between 1955 and '60, I was called in by a man in San Francisco whose name was Ezra Batat, (phoenetic), who has since departed. And he said I want you to take these cards and go out and solicit for the Jewish Welfare Federation, which was the name at that time. And I, I really didn't know exactly what it was.

Q. Are you in insurance at this point?

A. No, I am a produce distributor.

Q. Were you an insurance man in San Francisco?

A. In Northern California, yes. So I took these cards, and I started going to meetings and hearing what this was all about. And suddenly, I started to feel.

And I had to get some help, which is an amazing coincidence that at this liberator's conference I attended in Washington, later on in, in about 1978, there were a group of us standing around there. And it was less than 10 percent were Jewish.

And I saw these men standing around in the hotel

lobby. And there were -- they started in telling me things that I thought I was describing. How they -- their emotions were subdued and didn't think about what went on in these, the camps, until 10 or 15 years after the war. And, and everybody had the same experience.

Getting back to my, my evolvement, was with the Jewish Community Federation. And I, over the years, held all -- many of the different positions in the organization, and then was general campaign chairman in 1980, and vice-president of federation, and also work for the State of Israel Bond Organization, became chairman of that in the late '70's.

And I got involved in the Jewish Camp that sponsored -- called Camp Tomanga that's sponsored by the United Jewish Community Centers, where I had attended as a child, and became president of that for three years. And then was involved with the Jewish Vocational Service, where we got jobs for young people, and you counseled them.

And the whole, putting this whole thing -- yes, I was president of that one, too. And the whole, the motivation that I had was in order to have a homeland for the Jews, in then the State of Israel, that you also had to have a strong Jewish community, where people felt that they belonged.

And when the State of Israel was declared, May 14, 1948, it gave Jews in the United States, and in the Diaspora, the dignity that we had long deserved, that we

had kept our heads buried in sand while these people over in Israel were fighting, and the young people were dying, five wars, six wars.

And I knew that I had to support Israel, the State of Israel, because if -- and the theory has been that if there had been a state, that maybe these people could have gone there instead of being smuggled in after, in the late '40's.

And at one point, they were even on the ships. They were kept from going into Palestine before the state was formed. And were sent to Cyprus, which was another concentration camp. And they had to go through the same kind of camp.

But you asked me, at the beginning of this, about my feeling as a kid in San Francisco and as a young adult, all about the -- what was the feeling going into the camps, and who was Jewish, and who was not Jewish.

And there is a distinction. And I had been very fortunate to be able to have a wonderful family of three children and seven grandchildren, and have a, a good business, and at the same time, have this third dimension, which has enriched my life, that was motivated because of these experiences in the camps.

And even though they were two or three weeks, they left indelible marks in my memory, in my heart, that for the rest of my life, as I have done from the late '40's, been involved in this work.

And now I am working on the Campaign Cabinet of

the United States Holocaust Memorial Council that is building this tremendous museum in Washington, D.C. This is, this is what it's all about. Maybe -- and I don't have a monopoly on being involved. We have had, there are thousands and thousands of Jews all over the world.

And I have been on committees in Israel, and my wife and I are fortunate enough to have built a kindergarten, prekindergarten nursery school in a little town, development town right outside of Haifa. And as important as that is, it's important for our -- the Jews in our community to belong to, to all of the agencies, some of the agencies that we were able to support.

And it's given my life a purpose. And it's all -- that's why I call this book that I wrote for the kids Cause and Effect. And I am committed. I hope I live many, many years. And I am still committed to supporting these causes, because I remember Niso, and I remember the smoke chimneys, and I remember the bodies. And that was one big price that I have to help.

Q. In what way do you think, right after the war, there was a period perhaps when your faith was shaken by what you had seen? Did it affect your faith at all?

A. No, no, it didn't. That's because I wasn't thinking about it. I was very, very busy with little, little kids around the house.

Q. Were you consciously or unconsciously blocking that experience?

A. I believe that it was an unconscious block. I

believe that it didn't start until I was about 35, and at that point, I started having nightmares.

Q. You had nightmares?

A. Oh, you bet.

Q. Of the scene?

A. Yes.

Q. Very vivid ones?

A. Yes, yes. And you see, I wasn't a survivor. I was a witness. And yet being a witness, I had written some poetry. And I wrote one poem about, he was on the inside, and I was on the outside. And I have written some more poetry about the Soviet Jews, who are now helping in a big way to get them out of the Soviet.

And I have met them at the bottom of the plane, stairways in Israel. And I have seen them in Austria, Italy, in these camps. And I have written about them. And this is, this has devoured, engulfed, whatever you think, my while life, and that's why I am here.

Q. In looking back, have you ever thought that because they were on the inside and you were on the outside, that you never had any guilt about the fact that you basically had escaped all that? You were --

A. Guilt? Guilt isn't a strong enough word. And I think psychologically, it made a very big impact. And if you --

Q. What's a better word?

A. A better word than guilt. Guilt being one word, just better get off your duff and do something about

this, so it will never happen again.

Yes, you feel guilty, feel guilty as hell, that you -- that I was there, and they were on the inside, and why, why were they there? Because my grandparents came to the states in the early 1890's and theirs didn't. And it could have been me lying in that pile.

There's a beautiful monument to the deceased and the departed Jews in Yad Veshem, in Jerusalem, Israel. And we have led missions over there. I have been to Israel about roughly 25 trips. And it took me five times, five trips before I could walk into the door into Yad Veshem, where they have memorial services.

I still, or rather my lovely wife still insists or turns off anything that has to do with the Holocaust on TV, because I know what happens to this day. It's still with me.

Q. Do you know, did you know of how many of your relatives, perhaps remote ones, second cousins, aunts, whatever, who were left in the area where your grandparents came from?

A. No, I don't.

Q. Any idea what?

A. No.

Q. Were your wife's parents or grandparents?

A. They were from Rumania.

Q. From Rumania?

A. Yeah, and they lost whoever was left. That's something that you -- I know happened, and I don't know

the names, and I don't know the faces.

And yes, there is a word. Yes, there is a word about it. It takes the place of guilt. And that's faces. Looking at these dead, at the faces of these dead people, these dead Jews.

And Thelma and I went back to Ebensee, about three or four -- no, about five years ago. And I wanted to, I wanted to make the visit there for -- I had some drive to make it. And we drove from, from Vienna to, into Gemunden. And Thel said, "Well, how are you going to find anything? So I said, "Well, first I will show you the hotel where the -- the billet that we had, that we had occupied."

And I said, "It's just around that next block." And we drove right up to it, and I walked around there. And I didn't ask anyone for directions to the camp, Ebensee. And we drove a half mile to a mile away, and drove up to the camp, up to the site of the camp.

And for some reason, they left the archway in brick, the brick archway. They had taken down the sign erabeiten frei, that work makes you free. So does death. And standing in front of this entrance to a new housing development, there were two younger men, boys, standing there with their bikes.

And I got out of the car alone, and I went over to them. And the only thing I could think of saying was that I -- in my German, that I was here during the war, and there was a big camp here. And there was silence.

And one of these young boys said to me, weiss nicht gud, nicht gud.

The only thing I could say was es fertig. It's finished. We drove then to the cemetery, in this little town, and the only evidence that there was ever a camp there was a half of the crematoria door, way back in the corner of the cemetery.

And I stood there, and I said Kadish, because I had never said it before, and we left there. And I drove as fast as I could to get out of the country. We went to Italy, and I cried for several hours.

Q. Do you have a point of view about present danger frightening you?

A. I am frightened at the unification of Germany. And it's obvious that there's only one reason I am frightened, is because Germans are, are very creative, intelligent, aggressive, and warlike. And I, I just -- I would give anything, I would give my life for, for the cause that this would never happen again.

There are good things about it, too, that the countries in the east are getting a touch of freedom, and freedom is something that everybody needs.

Q. Thank you.

A. You are welcome.

Q. It might be nice if we could get a shot of your book there on tape, just so if somebody wanted to try to track it down.

A. Like this?

Q. Yeah. This is self-published; is that right?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. And --
A. A single publication of a hundred copies.
Q. A hundred copies. And are they in any libraries around the world? I think the Holocaust Center here would certainly like to have a copy.
A. I will see that they get one.
Q. Okay. You are not going to have that many grandchildren, are you?
A. I think they are through. They are wonderful.
Q. A lot of people think that.
A. I know.
(End of interview.)

KENNETH JOSEPH COLVIN

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INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH JOSEPH COLVIN
HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
JULY 11, 1990, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
INTERVIEWER: GENE AYERS
TRANSCRIBER: KATHERINE EISMANN

-oOo-

Q. Today is july 11, 1990. I am Gene Ayers, interviewing Ken Colvin at the Holocaust Library and Research Center, 639 14th Avenue, San Francisco. Mr. Colvin, I'll ask you to please start with your full name and spell it, if you would, please.

A. All right. Kenneth, K-E-N-N-E-T-H, middle name Joseph, J-O-S-E-P-H, last name Colvin, C-O-L-V-I-N.

Q. And your date of birth?

A. November 28, 1924.

Q. And where were you born?

A. In San Francisco.

Q. And I believe we can start, see if this fits your pattern to start with your, very briefly, your early life, and however you want to get us into the time when you entered the United States Army.

A. All right. There's a certain continuity to my life that I would have to start at the very early age, and that would be when I was about five or six, in San

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Francisco.

And my mother was the first president of the Diaspora in San Francisco. And I remember that I had a little red wagon. And I would go around door-to-door collecting wire hangers. And my mother would sell these, in turn, to the cleaners for a penny a piece. And that's how she earned her donor luncheon money for her Diaspora.

Now, I didn't know what a Diaspora was. And for many years, I didn't know what Zionism was. And I went through the channels of going to the grammar school at Alamo, and then Precidio Junior High School, and then to Lowell, and then one semester at U.C. Berkeley.

Now, along the way, I will say that, that I was very strongly influenced by the Jewish Community Center. I was a member of Hashana Hatzor, which was a Zionist youth group. I was a member of the AZA.

And then there's kind of a blank time in my career of my relationship to Judiasm. At one point, I was kind of confirmed at Temple Beth Israel in San Francisco. And Rabbi Elliot Bernstein was the Rabbi at that time, since deceased.

And the reason I mention his name is because as we go on in this interview, I want to read a letter to you that I wrote to this Rabbi when I was at one of the camps at Ebensee in Bavaria. This thread, this thread that has continued all of my life.

And I am sitting here holding a book that I wrote for, basically, for our seven wonderful grandchildren,

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who are in age at this point from one to five. And it's something I wanted to leave them.

I have always written these very long letters to each of our grandchildred as they were born, to be put away, to read when they are, you know, of age.

And then I sat down one day, and I said I am not satisfied with that. There's a message I have to tell our grandchildren. And that message, that message is what I saw and what, what depths that humanity can stoop to, and then tell them what I did about it in my own life.

Now, I have written this 300 page book, because I couldn't tell them enough in a letter. And each of these books are put away for either Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, hoping that they will learn by example, not by a group of rules to live by.

And if I can, if I can just get any, make any indentation in their or impression on their lives, so much the better. There is not a day that has gone by, in 45 years, that, in some way, somehow, that I don't think about the Holocaust.

Q. You were part of a Jewish family as a young man?

A. Yes.

Q. And it sounds as if you were active in Jewish life here in San Francisco as a youth, am I correct?

A. To some degree, and while I was in this confirmation class, I used to have big arguments with Rabbi Bernstein about Zionism, because I -

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Q. Were you for or against it?

A. I was against it. I didn't understand it, and so I didn't think that we needed any changes. I was very myopic in my observation of the world at that point.

Q. Zionism in the sense of having a Jewish home life?

A. That's right. That's right.

Q. You saw no need for that?

A. Not at that point.

Q. When you were a teenager?

A. That's right. That's right. But I certainly found a need for it in one question that I asked a Polish Jew, who was in a camp in Ebensee, Austria.

And I said - you know, the war was over, and I could speak to him with a little background of German and Yiddish. And I asked him, what are you going to do, now that the war is over?

And he said, well, he said, I am from Poland. And I have no home, and I have no family. Everybody has been killed. And the only thing that has kept me alive is Eretz, Israel, a homeland for Jews.

And if anyone ever had a starting point, I can pinpoint my whole life with that answer, Eretz, Israel.

Q. As a young man, and a San Franciscian, and you said Lowell High School, and so you were an educated person. And you were getting all kinds of news here in those days. And you would have been a teenager in the 1930's?

A. Uh-huh.

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Q. Were you - what did your father - was your father in the home?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. And what did your father do?

A. My father was a furrier, retail furrier in downtown San Francisco.

Q. In San Francisco?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And your mother was -

A. And my mother helped him at the store, and was active in the Temple Sisterhood, and the Diaspora, and other organizations that I only knew the name of.

Q. So were you aware, was your family aware, particularly aware, in those teenage years, of what was happening in Germany? Do you recall that?

A. Not particularly. I used to hear things and read things about what was going on in the states with the brown shirts and the boons, and isolationists, what was his name. I forget is name.

Q. Kaufmann.

A. Yes. What was going on at that time was a terrible depression in the mid 30's that went on to the end of the 30's, beginning of the 40's. And this depression has, in my opinion, a lot to do with what went on in Germany.

Because this madman, Hitler, was able to promise people, in the midst of a terrible depression in Europe, and particularly in Germany at that time, he promised

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them bread. And he hypnotized them to an extent that I will never understand how people could have bought that, but it happened. And we know it happened, and that's why we are sitting here today, to be sure that it never happens again.

But it's inconceivable to, to me, as an educated person, if I were to never have heard about the Holocaust, in the weirdest dreams that I might have, to visualize what went on. It's impossible.

Q. As a young man, apparently, you were in the public

school system?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. And as far as you could tell, the depression in this country left a greater impression on you, and had more to do with your everyday life than perhaps anything happening in Europe or over there. Is that accurate?
A. Yes, yes. It would be, except it started in, in about 1939 or '40, that there was an early draft in the United States. And some of those men - they were only going to be in for one year. And so they ended up being in for six or seven years.
So we were starting to hear about this. And as a young 16 or 17 year old boy in high school, or starting Cal, my world was very small, soon to be enlarged.
Q. What year did you start Cal?
A. In June of 1942, and I went into the Army, March, 1943. It was a case that my draft number was up, and so a bunch of us went down to the draft board and said okay.

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Let's go now. And we dropped out of school, and that's when it started.
Q. You said you began Cal in '42?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. And did you say June?
A. In June of '42.
Q. '42. Okay. Now, a moment ago, you mentioned that you were aware, at least tangentially, of activities in this country such as broum shirts, I think you said?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. And isolationists, of course, and earlier activities, perhaps in sympathy. Do you recall any of those?
A. Well, there was a good deal of anti-Semitism at that time.
Q. In San Francisco?
A. In San Francisco, all over the United States. It was open. It was rampant, and the Nazi's were having demonstrations, and no one took them seriously, least of all the Whitehouse.
Q. Was there ever anything happening in San Francisco like that that you recall, like Nazi parades or Bund - It wasn't quite so overtly Nazi, but anti-Semitic and Bund activities?
A. I tell you, there was a reason that I bring this up, and that is that my late brother was applying for a place in the Army. And this was in 1941.
And he had gone to several of the military

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branches. And our name, our given name at that time was Cohn, C-O-H-N. And there was no doubt that, that he was being rejected because of his Judiasm.
And so one day, I was - one night I was told that - to appear in court the next day with, with my older brother and my other middle brother. And we changed our name to Colvin.
And that was so, that was so, because my brother, my oldest brother, also wanted to go to law school. And there were restrictions and allocations for a limited number of Jews, if any, at the major schools in the country at that time.
So, yes, that had a very big impact on me. Frankly, I have always regretted that my name was changed, because to me it felt like I was hiding.
Q. Your brother, what year was - was he trying to obtain a commission?
A. Yes.
Q. And he had some college education, I gather?
A. Yes, he was in Stanford Business School. No, he had gone to law school. And, at that point, he was in Stanford Graduate Business School.
Q. What year was that he was trying to obtain -
A. '41.
Q. '41?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. Early in the war?
A. Uh-huh.

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Q. And along that line, do you remember your parents talking, saying there - you say there was a good deal of anti-Semitism? Did it affect you, or your family, or your parents in any special way, detailed way?
A. It was not what we could do, but what we couldn't do. Some of that still exists in our community today, in private clubs and private golf clubs.
And at that time, all of our family friends were Jewish. And we had a very close family at that point. I had a wonderful grandfather, who had - every Seder would start - he had his seven children, and their spouses, and the grandchildren.
And would start off this Seder by saying, when I arrived at Ellis Island, I had an apple and a jackknife. And he would hold his arms up gloriously, and say everything from then on was profit.
Now, this is why I wrote this book, because I wanted to tell our grandchildren what a wonderful country we live in, despite prejudice, despite limited opportunities. It's all out there. You can go out and make your own way.
And you can also do other things than just earn money, or do things in your own profession, or whatever. It's a strange, a strange phenomenon that happened to me, that because of a Holocaust, and because of what I got involved in after the Holocaust, in my adult life, that it's given me a third dimension of living, to know that, in some way, some small little way, you can still help in

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the world.
Q. You mentioned a grandfather who came to Ellis Island, a paternal grandfather?
A. Paternal grandfather. In fact, all four of my grandparents came over in the early 1890's. And they, they made it. They didn't have anyone there at the dock to meet them. They didn't have an apartment waiting for them or -
Q. Where did they come from?
A. They all four came from an area in Poland that vacillated between Poland and Russia, in what they call the Kolisky, Kolisky District. (Phoenetic)
And my grandfather arrived here. The man at immigration found it very hard to write Kolisky, so he wrote Cohn. So that is how we started off with a name that wasn't or original family name.
Q. What was your original family name, Cohn? No Kolisky?
A. Well, it was Kolisky, because my understanding is that they took the name of the village. Now, his first name was George or Gersin, and he would call himself George Kolisky. And last names didn't seem to, to be that important.
Q. This area in Poland where they were from was near what? What is the largest city around, if you can -
A. It's in southern Poland. I am not sure of the geography there. Perhaps they went back there after, in about 1927, and the stories that I heard and the

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testimonials that I have gathered from them, their whole family was living in poverty.
And after the war, we never heard any more about them. And we just have to conclude that they were all wiped out.
Q. Near the Czechoslovakian border, somewhere down there?
A. It could have been down that far, yes.
Q. So your four grandparents, in the '90's, 1890's, came. And you didn't know, of course, that two of them were going to be here. Your parents met here, I guess?
A. Yes.
Q. Or came to Ellis Island, and then when did your family make its way to the West Coast?
A. Early on. I would say it was before the turn of the century, because my father was born in New York, and my mother in San Francisco, and that would have been

around 1896, '98.
Q. And your parents met out here?
A. They met here at a Purim dance, and I am very glad they met.
Q. So you went through your normal youth here as a teenager growing up in the the lucky city of San Francisco.
And then along about 1939 and '40, things began to happen, and on the worldwide scene. You got into Cal in June of '42?
A. Right.

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Q. You said. And meanwhile, this country had gotten into war?
A. That's right.
Q. And at that point, the German Army had pretty nearly overrun all of Europe. And were you particularly attuned to that, at college age? There are many things going on, and a lot of times, at that age, you don't necessarily pay too much attention to what's happening on the other side of the world, do you?
A. Yeah. I would say that's true, except that with the exception that I started then having friends at college who, who were drafted. Who were called in to the Army Reserve Corps. And four of them that I knew were killed during the war. And it started to bring it to home very fast.
And I knew that I was going in one of these days. And when I finally went in, in the beginning of March, '43, I was 18 plus a few months, and very green behind the ears.
Q. Did you say your draft number came up; is that what compelled you?
A. My draft number was going to come up, and we just – the few friends we had at that point, we all decided, you know, let's go. And so the coincidence was that my oldest brother and I went to Fort Ord, in Monterey, on the same train, the same morning, leaving our parents at the Third and Townsend. And my other brother Lenny was already in Dutch Harbor in the Seabees.

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So my mother had the three stars in a window.
Q. Did you have any other sons or daughters?
A. No, there were just three boys in our family.
Q. And at that point, you were all in the armed services?
A. Yes.
Q. And you and your brother enlisted in the Army?
A. My older brother Renny was in the Enlisted Reserve Corps., and just by coincidence we left on the same train.
Q. Did it occur, he tried, you said, to get a commission?
A. Yes.
Q. And you feel he was rejected because of his Jewish background?
A. He felt that.
Q. He felt that?
A. Yeah. And made the decision autonomously for the three of us. Our parents did not change their name.
Q. Is that right? So the three of you, including the Seabee?
A. Yes.
Q. All entered the service with the name of Colvin?
A. That's right.
Q. Then here you are on your way to Fort Ord, and your brother is on the same train?
A. Yes.
Q. And you are an enlisted man?

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A. Yes.
Q. You are sworn in before you get there?
A. Yes.
Q. Before you left Third and Townsend?
A. That's right.
Q. So you are in the Army now?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. And once there, did you encounter anything at all that would lead you to think that there was anti-semitism in basic training or any sort of training that you underwent at this stage?
A. No.
Q. Colvin is not a Jewish name?
A. Well, I didn't hide the fact that I was Jewish, and I went to services on Friday nights, in basic training, and I never concealed my Judaism nor have I ever.
Q. You were just one of many there, and there were other Jews, of course, all around you?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. At this point, were you – now we are into 1943?
A. Right.
Q. And you are in basic training in the Army. You don't have time for much else, but were you aware, at this point, of Hitler's design for the Jewish people in Europe? By this time, the concentration camps had been built, and people had long since been sent there?
A. To my memory, I don't recall that we knew about

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this in '43. Maybe the word was out, and I have since heard that there were messengers that got out and even went to see President Roosevelt.
Q. How about things, your recollections of whether or not you recall things in Germany itself, where there were laws being passed. There were news stories about what was happening, Kristallnacht?
A. I remember about Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938. And I remember hearing about that, but all of this –
Q. You were 14?
A. Pardon?
Q. You were 14 then?
A. Yes. All of this didn't seem real yet to a young kid in San Francisco.
Q. Do you recall your dad or your mom saying to you this is what's happening to the Jews in Germany, or this is what this man did, any comment like that?
A. Not strongly, not strongly. We lived with this, so it wasn't, it wasn't an announcement that came across the dining room table. And it was – I think my father was very conscious of his Judaism. And he was not a great Zionist.
My mother, on the other hand, was a Zionist, and this rubbed off on me years later.
Q. What sort of family was it, whether an orthodox, or conservative, or reformed?
A. Conservative to reformed.
Q. Somewhere in there?

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A. Somewhere in there. That's correct. We actually went to Beth Israel, which was conservative, who have since combined with Temple Isaiah in Wood Lake, Daly City.
Q. And once in the Army, there were services available?
A. Yes, on Friday nights.
Q. And you went to those?
A. Yes.
Q. You still managed to be a practicing and take part in Jewish activities in the Army?
A. That's right.
Q. Yeah. Fort Ord is a place where you got basic training?
A. That's right.
Q. And how long were you there. How did you finally get into where you settled into in the Army?
A. At Fort Ord, it was mostly classification testing and some basic training. And originally, I was classified as an Air Corps gunner, tail gunner and mechanic.
And I was shipped over off to Fresno, and went through basic training, during the summer of '43, at the very hot fairgrounds in Fresno. And I don't know how it

happened, but I started getting involved with the dispensary, in our basic training camp there, and started helping the doctors do some work there. And it's all very vague how I got started, but I was very interested

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in it.

We were at Fresno for a few months for basic training, and then we were given a test by the Army. And it was for the ASTP, Army specialized training program. And I was sent to Stanford for more classification tests, and developed a very close friendship with a man named Bernard Fredkin from San Jose. Who we have remained very, very close for the last 45 or 50 years.

We were then sent to University of Cincinnati, where I had a years training in the ASTP studying engineering. And just about that time, at the end of the year, in late '44, probably in the fall of '44, is when the Battle of the Bulge took place.

Q. Christmas '44?

A. Christmas of '44, and then just wiped out the whole program. We were supposed to go through and get our engineering degrees, and be commissioned and all, and so it was just wiped out.

And I was sent to one camp and reclassified and ended up with the 515th medical clearing company at Camp Breckonridge, Kentucky. Because I put down that I was in premed at the University of California for one quarter.

At that time, it was obvious to them that I was - I would qualify to be a medic. So I had a very good instincts and felt very comfortable being a surgical technician, where I had gone through training at one of the camps in Indiana or something. And we used to practice surgery on dogs and animals. And they were

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treated very humanely, and just as humans would have been treated.

And at that point, we left to go overseas from New York. And this was in January of '45. It took about three weeks to get over to, to La Havre, because we were in a convoy, and we went zigzagging across the ocean. And it wasn't very much fun.

Q. Did you travel well on the sea?

A. I do now, but not sleeping up on the fourth bunk right under - the air conditioner was about three inches from my head.

Q. How many were you on the ship?

A. On the ship, I don't know.

Q. It was a military transport?

A. It was a military transport.

Q. And you were sleeping four deep in bunks?

A. Yes, and I was down in D deck, which is A, B, C, D, and that's where I was. We were supposed to - as a medical clearing company, we were supposed to be second in line of evacuation. At the front line, you have an aide man, going to a medical detachment, to an Army infantry or infantry on whatever.

And then we would send the patients back to the medical clearing company. This was all tactwise. And we were supposed to classify them right there, and either give them more attention, or send them back to evacuation hospital.

And then from there they would go to a general

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hospital or back to the states. So just, just in the series of evacuation, we were supposed to be number two.

Q. So a corpsman would be with the infantry?

A. Yeah.

Q. Or whatever fighting unit was there, and you would be one step behind that, which might well be, correct me if I am wrong -

A. Pretty close.

Q. Three or 400 yards?

A. Well, maybe a half mile back.

Q. Well within artillery range, of course?

A. Yes.

Q. And that was the way things were set up, on paper at least, for it to be?

A. That's the way.

Q. Yeah. Then when did you join your unit that was in action, or how long was it after you left La Havre before you joined a unit that was in action?

A. It was about two months, about two months.

Q. What was that unit, or where did you join them?

A. We stayed in the same 515th medical clearing company that I stayed with all during my overseas experiences. And we had no idea what was waiting for us. This was an experience that, in retrospect, has stayed with me every day and influenced my life, and the life of my own family, very - to a great degree.

Q. Now, this experience, are you talking about when you joined the group that was in combat, or are you

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talking about -

A. We didn't go into combat. What we did, as a clearing company, we were assigned to the Third Army. And we were - our goal was to go into the camps as they were liberated, within the first few days, if not the first day, the second day, and go in and set up emergency medical treatment, which is very difficult to talk about to this day, but I want to.

Q. So you were assigned to the Third Army, and a medical clearing company would probably provide support for an entire division, or a regiment or -

A. It would, but we weren't attached to -

Q. I understand.

A. We were a loner. And we got our orders directly from Third Army to go to this camp, and you get set up with your emergency dispensaries and all that, and treat them, whatever you could do.

And then after a few weeks, you would move on to another camp. And so it was one right after another. And these, these were mostly satellite camps of the major concentration camps that we went into.

Q. But your particular job in the company was what?

A. Medical technician, surgical technician.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And I was - that was still probably before I was 19.

Q. And you had to have medical training back in the states?

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A. Be that as it may.

Q. The kind the Army would give you, several months perhaps?

A. No, not several months, no.

Q. You had been premed at Cal, but that showed more of an inclination of what you wanted to be?

A. That's right.

Q. Than what you could be. So you were attached to the Third Army. You knew that they were going to certain areas, or I presume you knew?

A. The southern area.

Q. Yes. Were you told that your area might include the subcamp of Mauthausen or any other?

A. We didn't know.

Q. You didn't know anything about that?

A. We didn't know anything until we rode into the first camp at Hemar, Germany. H-E-M-A-R.

Q. And where is that located about?

A. That was somewheres near Regensburg, I believe.

Q. And what was your experience there? It had been liberated, of course?

A. Well, it had been liberated. And these people were now called D.P.'s, displaced persons. And this was a camp that they had a big problem, that they couldn't let the liberated prisoners run amuck.

So they still had guards at the front gate to keep them in. And we would go in every morning and work very long hours. And the first impression of walking in, and

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probably will remain with me forever.

First I want to clarify one point. That people in

my position in the Army, who went into these camps, were called liberators. And I will refer to this later, because I, at one time, went to a liberators conference in Washington several years ago.

The word liberator is absolutely repulsive to me. Because if anything, that took away any glory that might be placed on, on other people's shoulders and would detract from the condition and the respect that I have for these people, the Krieggies, as they called them, who were liberated.

You know, it's a situation that where you would say, well, you know, everybody has heard about this. But I am somebody who saw it. And so I have always referred to myself as a person who was a – I am choking up a little bit – who witnessed the camps, and that what I will always be is a witness.

And we walked in, and we saw – it was all men in this camp, and there were piles of naked bodies. The stench in the air from the burning of the bodies, where the smoke was being spewed over the whole side of the country there, that these people died. They were, they were stacked up like, like wood next to a fireplace and to go into the incinerator or the crematorium.

And these people were there, and you couldn't really see a person. There were bones, and it was – their eyes were recessed, and it was like they had no

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eyes. I can never distinguish a body.

And they had open pits where, where they were starting to bury them instead of burning them. And it was just a horrible experience, and it still is.

People have asked me about, you know, how did I feel? And I have to tell them, that I didn't feel. And later, when I talk about this conference, in Washington, you couldn't feel. Because if you did, you would just blowup. I mean, you would pass out.

You couldn't start to have sympathy for Jews who who were dead, who were starved, who were beaten, and thrown about as dirt in the world. You couldn't feel. I can feel it today. But I didn't then.

What we did was to go in and start delousing them with DDT. And it was so degradating to us and to them, in particular, that they would have to get undressed in front of us. And we would squirt DDT powder all up and down their body, and then we did it to ourselves, because at that time, DDT was supposed to kill everything. And years later, we hear it was a carcinogenic, so it couldn't have done us too much good.

Q. Was this a work camp?

A. This was a work, work camp, yeah.

Q. And you were there a day or two, I gather?

A. After it was liberated. That's right.

Q. After it was liberated. And there were American guards to keep the people in one place?

A. Yes.

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Q. So that you could go in there and attend to them medically; is that right?

A. Yeah. And we had a hundred men. We had a hundred men in our company. That included about eight doctors, two dentists, two administrative medical officers. And there were only about 12 or 15 of us enlisted men who attended to them.

And we would set up emergency medical treatment. And we, I remember we confiscated or appropriated a house, just down the street from this hill, where you go up to the camp. And one of the days while we were there, these prisoners broke – these liberated prisoners broke through the gate. And there was a little farm house right across the street from where our villa was, and there was a pig outside.

And they ran down, maybe 50 or 75 of them, and they encircled this pig, and they tore it apart with their hands. And they hadn't – you know, I mean, obviously, they had a pretty tough diet up to then. And they – all that was left was just a little blood on the ground. And I saw men in the camp who were liberated drinking out of mud puddles that had been caused by rain. This is just inhumane. It was –

Q. Was there disease there?

A. Lots. Lots of disease.

Q. Typhus, perhaps?

A. We worked with patients who had typhus, who had temperatures that went up beyond 105, six, seven. And

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one man told me there that the Germans, the Gerries, the Nazi's, whatever you call them – I have worse names than that for them. That they had – they found a new cure for typhus. And I said, "What is it?" He said the crematoria. He said before you die, they just throw them in.

Q. Do you know what sort of work they were doing there at this place?

A. No, I didn't. I didn't, because we – it wasn't until we got to Ebensee that I really got involved more on a person-to-person basis.

Q. Do you know whether most of these people were Jews?

A. They were in that camp.

Q. They were?

A. Yeah. Some of the other camps –

Q. Do you know where they had come from?

A. Yeah, Poland, Germany. You see, in Poland, they lost four and a half million Jews. And the million and a half, in the overall six million, there were still a million and a half children that were killed during the war.

Q. Were these – you said all men, I think?

A. In this camp was all men.

Q. Where there children?

A. I didn't see any children.

Q. This was a work camp, and clear these people hadn't had an adequate diet. There were skeletons you

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said?

A. Yeah.

Q. What had caused most of these deaths that you were able to ascertain?

A. Starvation, TV's.

Q. They either were burying them or cremating them?

A. No. When they died, they burned them, or they would – when we got there, then we had, we had duties to supervise some of the German soldiers to dig the ditches and the common burial graves, and give these people some last rights.

Q. Any idea how many persons there were there?

A. No, but I can refer to this book that I have written, if you will allow me, because there is a –

Q. In a rough way, hundreds, thousands?

A. Oh, I would say there were probably, in each one of these camps we went into, 10 to 20,000 people. And the frustration, frustration was being able to give them attention and give them medical treatment was impossible, just impossible. It was too overwhelming. And at the same time, all of us just ate our emotions and did the best we could.

Q. After you arrived there, they continued to die?

A. Yeah, they were dying. They were dying at the – before we got there, and I have, in this reference book that I have written, a – they estimated a hundred to a hundred and 50 were dying every day. And that number gradually decreased as we were there and started giving

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them food, which was a very difficult problem.

Because the food that they – that we were giving them was too rich, and then they had more stomach problems. And you wanted to give them anything you had.

Q. There was a good reason for not letting them simply go free, wasn't there?

A. Absolutely. They would have gone into the cities or villages around where each of these camps was, and they would have just ravaged the place.

Q. *Plus carry the disease, in some cases?*
A. I don't – I didn't worry about that. That didn't even enter my mind.
Q. *As a medical person, a little older perhaps, you might?*
A. I am sure it would, but not at that time.
Q. *What ultimately – you went on to other camps, I gather?*
A. Yes.
Q. *But you may know what ultimately became of them. Were they basically sent to D.P. camp someplace?*
A. Well, each of these camps was being established as displaced persons camps. They just turned the – used a different word than saying prisoners. And what happened to them after we left is – in piecing this all together, is that the U.S. Army went in, and the Red Cross went in, and the Joint Distribution Committee went in, and helped either send them back to their homes or get them to Palestine at that time.

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Q. *You say your impression is that most of these people were Jews?*
A. Yes.
Q. *Or virtually all of them?*
A. Not in all of the camps, this one, this one was. In Ebansee, that's where I had most of my experience in the camps.
Q. *This was about, what time, when would you have gone to this place? Do you recall roughly?*
A. Yes, I –
Q. *Probably April, March or April of 1945?*
A. That's right.
Q. *About when the liberating was occurring then?*
A. Yes.
Q. *And in all, there were – how many such camps did you get to?*
A. Well, we went to about eight of the camps, labor camps. And we would spend two to three weeks initially getting them started and then moving on.
Q. *Can you remember some of the other names?*
A. Yes, if I could refer to our – to the schedule that we had.
Q. *You called them Krieggies?*
A. Krieggies, as I remember, was a word for prisoner, in the Army. I think the name of the war was Krieg, wasn't it? I am not sure of that.
Q. *Blitz Krieg?*
A. Blitz Krieg, whatever. But they were referred

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to – yeah, this is a report that I have included from the history of our company, and I will just pick out the places that we worked.
Q. *Just locate them in a general way, if you remember.*
A. Well, they have the Army map referenced. And this was, oh, in Southern Germany and Bavaria, all down in that area. One was Oberhausen, in Germany, Ranshofen, (phoenetic) in Austria, that was near the Danube. Ultmunster, (phoenetic) which was the little town next to Ebensee, and Holenfeldz, (phoenetic) which was down in the same area.
And I think from then on, it was just getting back and – at the point we were on a ship coming home from Marseilles, in September, I think it was September of '45, the war in the Pacific was over, and we were on our way to the Pacific. And it was over, and I remember the ship just turning around and how relieved we were.
Q. *When you were at – did you say Hemar? Is that the way you pronounce it?*
A. Yes.
Q. *The war was still going on?*
A. Uh-huh.
Q. *And were you at several other of the camps, while the war was still going on?*
A. Yes. Yeah, in all of these, it was well behind the lines. And what happened at these camps is that, as the Americans were, or English or whoever was liberating

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the camps, the Germans would flee. The guards would flee. And some of them they didn't get out in time.
Q. *The guards had fled at Hemar?*
A. Uh-huh. There was also a hospital at Hemar that we worked in that was just in horrible condition.
Q. *In what way?*
A. In cleanliness, lack of food, lack of decent food, and why they put some of these people in a hospital, I will never know. Because that wasn't their real style. But part of our outfit was working in the hospital there.
Q. *Were all of the camps work camps in the same sense? They had tasks or duties to do. Were any of them, to your knowledge, have any other specialized purpose?*
A. No. They, they were work camps, where they would work the Jews as well as the non-Jews. As I said before, there were six million Jews that were killed in the war, and there were also six million non-Jews. And I have as much respect for them as the Jews.
Q. *In all the camps you went to, was most of the work force Jewish, would you say?*
A. Depending on the makeup of the camp. It was a combination I am sure.
Q. *Yeah.*
A. I don't think they discriminated at that last point.
Q. *Then you were changing locales about every three weeks during this period of time?*

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A. That's right.
Q. *And what stands out as perhaps the worst place, the most horrible place that you can remember, if you can recall?*
A. Yes. This would be at Ebensee, in Austria or Bavaria, which was a work camp. It was a subcamp of Nordhausen, which was, which was the final solution camp.
But those that could still work, they sent to Ebensee. They worked down in a tunnel, about a half a mile from the camp. Every day, there they were making arms and ammunition for the Germans.
And they would work 12 hour shifts, and then the next shift would come on. And their food rations were nil. And the barbaric treatment they received, in one sense, I guess it was because the guards knew that they had an endless supply of machines known as human beings, and when one of them wore out, they would just send them to the infirmary or to the crematoria. And there was no sense of human beings, of two human beings. One was a human, a guard, and the other was a piece of dirt. And when he died, didn't make any difference. They had more people they would send in to work.
Q. *What did you find when you arrived there? The guards had gone already again?*
A. Yeah, the guards were gone.
Q. *Were these Austrian guards, or what were they?*
A. They were SS. To my knowledge, all of these guards were SS. When we went in there, it was the same

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scene as all of the other labor camps, piles of bodies up to the top of this room. The crematorium was still blowing out the smoke of our brothers and sisters, and mother's and fathers, and children.
Q. *Was Ebensee not all men I gather?*
A. The part that we were in was all men. And I was assigned, at that time, two jobs. One, I worked in an infirmary that we set up in one of the, one of the officer's buildings of the Nazi's.
And the other, most of the time I spent in a TB ward. And I will describe that ward to you. They gave me a mask and some rubber gloves, and here was a whole room full of barracks, of bunks that were three or four high. And they were made out of wood.
There was no mattress for them to sleep on, to lay on, and there were three men in each bunk and one thin

blanket. And that's all there was.
At the very beginning, we were just feeding them gruel, that you just scoop, dish out, and then as we got going.
Q. That was all their stomachs could handle?
A. Yeah. Then we started later giving them something better. But I still, I still didn't want to feel. There were times that I did feel then. And two things stand out in my memory at that point.
One of them was a letter that I wrote to Rabbi Bernstein in San Francisco. And the other was a testimonial that I – there was one man from Greece. His

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name was Niso. That's all I remember, N-I-S-O. And he could speak English.
He was the only man out of – there were probably 150 men in this, in this barracks, all with TB, and dysentery, and what have you, and typhus.
And this one man could speak English. And he was a little more active than everyone else. He was able to get up out of the bunk. And he told me – he asked me where I was from. And I said San Francisco.
And he said, he said, "My God." He said, "That's near Vallejo," which, of course, is Vallejo. And he said I have relatives in Vallejo. And their name is a Abrauf (phoenetic). And about a year before that date, I had been in fraternity at Cal rooming with this man's second cousin. It was, it was pretty shaking.
Q. Did he survive?
A. I don't know. I will tell you, I will tell you a story about him. First, if I may, could I read a testimonial that he, that he wrote for me?
All right. I am going to read this to you as I wrote it in this book for our grandchildren, and those who succeed them.
Testimony fo the Greek prisoner, Niso. Before I start copying the following story written for me by a man I consider a friend, I would like to preface this by a short introduction.
We are now working at one of the Master Mind's famous stalags, at Ebensee, Austria. We have been at

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three or four other stalags in Germany and Austria, but according to the stories the liberated prisoners tell us, this a the jumping off point for all those who were at the end of their line.
When we arrived the men were in a sad state of affairs. However, that does not infer that because the Americans have taken good care of the hundreds of malnutrition cases, that they have recovered completely from the life of starvation and mistreatment for periods of up to six years. The following is a story which is a typical case.
This man, 29 years old, was a prosperous lawyer in Athens, Greece. Obviously, he was a well learned man, speaking seven languages. His English is rather broken, but I will copy his story as he has written it.
When we arrived, Niso was a human skeleton. Our medical officer predicted that he wouldn't last very long. But after talking to him and hearing his will and determination to live, we are certain that nothing will kill him. I have never seen a man alive and still as thin as he was.
We Americans can hardly comprehend their conditions. But I have seen it. Let me so tell you his story. This is a letter that I wrote to my parents, and enclosed his testimony.
My story, like the story of many other thousands of political prisoners in German concentration camps, this is difficult to be told, as to be written, for the

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things and happenings we have had in these vernichtenlagern, that is these camps of annihilation, are above all imagination.
When I was taken by the Germans, I was packed up in the railway wagon of these that are used for horses. We were in it 70 persons, women, children, old and young people without place to seat and food for only five days. It was in July. The weather was fairly warm, and there were only two little windoes that allowed the warmth to come but no air.
In such conditions, from Greece, we traveled in these close wagons 14 days, through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, until we arrived at a point between Germany and Poland called Auschwitz. There lay one of the biggest concentration camps of the Germans, with thousands and thousands of all nationalities and religions, Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Czechoslovakians, Greeks, Yugoslavs, and naturally lots of Jews.
When we came out from the railway, only in our wagon from the suffering of travel, only 47 out of 70 were alive. The others were dead during the travel.
Coming out of the train, there was a selection made by a German SS medical officer. He separated the young, and the good for work from the others, older, weak. I was put together with a column of young men, separated from our mothers, sisters, parents, and we were closed in a wooden barracks, more than 800.

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We lived there without working, with food just enough for not starving, enduring the cold, the beating of the SS, staying out in the rain almost naked. For as clothing, we had only a trouser and jacket, no shirt, no underwear, rotten shoes.
One day comes a commissioner and chooses a party of 1,000 men to go to work in a coal mine 80 kilometers from the place. I was also chosen. Then began the most terrible part of my sufferings.
Fancy a man that does not know what is in mind, and from one day to the other to be sent 600 meters to dig for cole. The work was terribly hard, little food, and much danger and much mortality.
I worked in the mine shaft from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., and made the life four months. And I may say it took the life out of me. I became skinny, yellow, and always going to be ill. Then I also had a double pneumonia.
They sent me to, sent me nearly to a better world. I wonder also today how I managed to get out of it. I was in the hospital more than a month, recovering with fever and wishing more than ever to die for putting me to an end to my suffering.
One day, my fever when away. The German doctor did not wait a single day. He sent me out of the hospital barracks, immediately back to work. I was so weak, so skinny, I couldn't even go. The result was that three days later, a complication came, and I was back in

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the hospital.
I remained another 15 days, but before I was well, there was an evaluation of the camp. The Russians were advancing, and we had to move. The travel lasted six days through Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, until Austria.
It was in January, 1945, with heavy snow. And they had us packed in open railway wagons, 100 people in each car. It was the most terrible thing a man had seen. I cannot that write. It is too difficult. Just fancy that we were sitting under the dead, surrounded by dead comrades. Nobody cared. We were completely like beasts, starving and freezing.
In those six days, of the original party that went away of the 2,500, only 1,200 arrived, and in what condition. So I arrived at Ebansee. The other camps were already bad enough, but I had no idea of what the camp at Ebensee was.
In the first place, we made a period of two weeks of quarantine. When that was over, they sent us to work. To work in Ebensee means nearly death. It was snowing continuously, and we were nearly naked, dressed with a pair of striped trousers and striped jacket.

Somebody had a shirt, but the many had nothing on the body. And to work 12 hours a day, in the snow and the cold nearly without food, the proportion of dead was [illegible] and increasing every day. The crematorium had every day more work to do, more corpses to burn.

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I got ill and was recovered in the hospital. This saved my life, for it made me pass two days of the hardest, two of the hardest months of winter indoors.

In April, I went back to work. We were all hearing already of the progress of the American and Russian Armies, and I took the resolution to make all I could to resist until liberation. I was thinking that it would be a pitty, after all I had endured, to lose my life in the last moment.

A week before the Americans entered Ebensee, I was back in the hospital ill. There it was, overcrowded. I had to lay in the earth. And in a week, I was nearly to death point.

But when the Americans came, it was a nice day. What they did for us, you know that better than everybody else. But what they did for me was simply astonishing. They made a live man out of a dead man. From here on, you can go on with this story alone, for you were the best eyewitness of it.

Those few, those few lines are written so without care, due to my physical situation, and give only a faint idea of what, what was my life in camp. But the day will come when I shall have the occasion to meet you in civilian life, and I will better tell my story. Ebensee, Austria, May 29, 1945.

Q. And you never knew whether he survived?

A. There's two more things about him, When our company was called to move, we – the notice came

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[illegible]rough, and I was in the room with Niso and all of the [illegible]ther patients.

And one of my friends in my company came in and said, "Ken, go outside, get on the truck. We are moving out." And I just turned around and started to walk out. And he called to me, and he said, "Kenneth," he says, "you just can't leave me like this."

And that's when I knew I started to feel. I couldn't answer him. Years later, my wife and I were in Athens, and we had gotten, through his family in Vallejo, we had gotten known numbers of some of his relatives. And I called one of them, and I said, "I am trying to locate Niso." And he said, "I am sorry." He said, "he never made it through the war."

Q. He never – you just didn't know what had happened to him?

A. I know what happened to him. These men were so emaciated, that any possibility of their living longer, let alone to reach that day, but going through – and it's interesting. There are three men in the San Francisco area that were in that camp that are now here that I am friendly with. And I have talked to them. And I have gotten a lot more information about Ebensee from them.

Q. Was he Jewish; do you know?

A. He was Jewish, yes, so far.

Q. And you abruptly were taken out of Ebensee?

A. Yes.

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Q. What, if you know, what happened to those prisoners who remained? Was there another unit relieved you?

A. Yeah, other units in – and why they kept moving [illegible]s, I will never know, because this was the Army. And they had their own reasons. What happened to those people, I found out from these three people in San Francisco who were inmates at that, at Ebensee. And the Joint Distribution came in and tried to help them.

Q. That's the Jewish organization?

A. Yes, the JDC, yes. I started to feel at that point. That was the last camp that we worked in. And I wrote a letter to my old Rabbi, which I would like to read to you, at which point, I probably can't find. I think it's here. I can't find it right now, but I can tell you what it said.

Q. Go ahead.

A. I wrote to Rabbi Bernstein. And I told him, we were living in this little summer resort in Ultmunster, phoenetic. And I said to him that I know that I was very argumentative about a homeland for the Jews when I was a younger boy, and described to him what I saw in the camps. That it was almost – it was incredible, and how horrible things were, and that if there is anything I can do in my life to help create a homeland now for Jews, I was going to dedicate my life to do it.

And I found out later that he read that to his congregation, and someone kept that letter. And a man

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named Lou Stein, who was the executive director of Israel Bond organization, and I was chairman in my later years. And I had a 50th birthday party. And he got up and read that letter. And it was very emotional for me, as it is today.

Q. Thirty days passed since you had written it, or 30 years.

A. He had the original. He had the original letter in his hand, and it was pretty tough to take.

Q. You left there, and by the way, what was your brother doing during these, during this time when you were in this medical company, and what happened to him? Did he get assigned to do what?

A. My oldest brother was at Fort Warren, if that was the name, in Utah. And he was on his way to Lucias, and he received a medical discharge. He had a very serious problem which later caused his death.

Q. And your brother?

A. And my brother in the Seabees went from Dutch Harbor down to Saiban, Saipan, and a few other islands in the Pacific.

Q. He made it through?

A. He made it through.

Q. When you left Ebensee then, what happened to you up until the time you left that area and came back to the United States?

A. After that, we were sent to an R and R camp someplace, and then ended up in Marseilles, because we

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were, as I said before, we were going to be redeployed to the South Pacific.

Q. R and R is rest and recreation?

A. Rest and recreation, yes.

Q. And you were on a ship headed for the South Pacific?

A. That's right. That's right.

Q. And –

A. Very unfortunate thing happened the day that we left for the South Pacific. We had one medical officer and one dental officer who were Nissis, American Japanese born. And they called them out in front of all of us and told them they couldn't go to the Pacific, because it was a security risk. And it was – I said to myself that there is no end to discrimination. It was horrible.

Q. They sent you to Germany?

A. Uh-huh, but they couldn't send them.

Q. Couldn't send them?

A. These men were, these men were beautiful. One was a Terman Fellow at Stanford, where he was a genius. And they followed his life all the way for the rest of his life. There was a psychological study.

Q. When he returned to this country, I think you said the ship was an Army?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. How far had you proceeded toward Japan or the Far East?

A. We were out about three days, when the loudspeaker

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came on and said that we were going back to the states.

As the boat turned, we could - I followed the shadows just changing right across the boat.

And all of the sudden, within 10 minutes, there was more alcohol on the decks that everybody had had in their duffel bags, and it was a very thrilling experience.

Q. You were starting to go through the Suez Canal and go that way, and you turned around and headed back?

A. That's right.

Q. And were you aware that the atomic bomb had fallen on Hiro Jima?

A. We had heard that. We heard that. Yeah, we got that news.

Q. Then you were in Germany overall or in - yeah, in Germany about how long?

A. I would say it was about 10 months.

Q. Ten months?

A. Ten months. And you mentioned something before, when we left, and I don't want to be trite about the choice of words. Because I have, this has always stayed with me. That you can, you can visit, and you can work in a D.P. camp, but you will never leave it. Never.

Q. You brought it back with you of course?

A. Still have.

Q. I mean, how long does it take you to get back into civilian life in this country?

A. I was stationed at Camp Beale in Marysville for a

few months, and then I was discharged. And that's, during the time I was in Europe and also there, I had been taking a correspondence course to be an insurance broker, to go to work for one of my uncles. And so I came home, and had a two weeks vacation in someplace, and then went right to work.

Q. This would be in?

A. In '46.

Q. '46.

A. Uh-huh. January, February, January, '46.

Q. And you were separated from the Army then in late '45, perhaps?

A. Beginning of January, '46.

Q. Uh-huh. You said you had been - this has affected you and caused you to work in, in various causes every since. Why don't you describe some of those that you have been doing?

A. All right. I found I saw the cost of being a Jew, and I saw what these people had to go through, because they were Jews. And the one man who told me that the only thing that kept him alive was Eretz Israel, a homeland for Jews in Israel.

For about 10 years, after I got home, I didn't - nothing touched me, except, with the exception of the declaration of independent by the State of Israel. And we attended a giant meeting at the opra house the night after the State of Israel was declared.

And I started to think about this thing a little

more. I would say it was about 10 to 15 years after the war that it hit me and got to my emotions. And I, I was a very upset man.

Q. Were you active in Gangalis (phoenetic) after the war?

A. Not at that time or minimally. Minimally, because we had three children in the early 50's. And yes, I was involved with our Temple or something, but not to a great degree.

And then in about 1959, '50 to - somewheres between 1955 and '60, I was called in by a man in San Francisco whose name was Ezra Batat, (phoenetic), who has since departed. And he said I want you to take these cards and go out and solicit for the Jewish Welfare Federation, which was the name at that time. And I, I really didn't know exactly what it was.

Q. Are you in insurance at this point?

A. No, I am a produce distributor.

Q. Were you an insurance man in San Francisco?

A. In Northern California, yes. So I took these cards, and I started going to meetings and hearing what this was all about. And suddenly, I started to feel.

And I had to get some help, which is an amazing coincidence that at this liberator's conference I attended in Washington, later on in, in about 1978, there were a group of us standing around there. And it was less than 10 percent were Jewish.

And I saw these men standing around in the hotel

lobby. And there were - they started in telling me things that I thought I was describing. How they - their emotions were subdued and didn't think about what went on in these, the camps, until 10 or 15 years after the war. And, and everybody had the same experience.

Getting back to my, my evolvement, was with the Jewish Community Federation. And I, over the years, held all - many of the different positions in the organization, and then was general campaign chairman in 1980, and vice-president of federation, and also work for the State of Israel Bond Organization, became chairman of that in the late '70's.

And I got involved in the Jewish Camp that sponsored - called Camp Tomanga that's sponsored by the United Jewish Community Centers, where I had attended as a child, and became president of that for three years. And then was involved with the Jewish Vocational Service, where we got jobs for young people, and you counseled them.

And the whole, putting this whole thing - yes, I was president of that one, too. And the whole, the motivation that I had was in order to have a homeland for the Jews, in then the State of Israel, that you also had to have a strong Jewish community, where people felt that they belonged.

And when the State of Israel was declared, May 14, 1948, it gave Jews in the United States, and in the Diaspora, the dignity that we had long deserved, that we

had kept our heads buried in sand while these people over in Israel were fighting, and the young people were dying, five wars, six wars.

And I knew that I had to support Israel, the State of Israel, because if - and the theory has been that if there had been a state, that maybe these people could have gone there instead of being smuggled in after, in the late '40's.

And at one point, they were even on the ships. They were kept from going into Palestine before the state was formed. And were sent to Cyprus, which was another concentration camp. And they had to go through the same kind of camp.

But you asked me, at the beginning of this, about my feeling as a kid in San Francisco and as a young adult, all about the - what was the feeling going into the camps, and who was Jewish, and who was not Jewish.

And there is a distinction. And I had been very fortunate to be able to have a wonderful family of three children and seven grandchildren, and have a, a good business, and at the same time, have this third dimension, which has enriched my life, that was motivated because of these experiences in the camps.

And even though they were two or three weeks, they left indelible marks in my memory, in my heart, that for the rest of my life, as I have done from the late '40's, been involved in this work.

And now I am working on the Campaign Cabinet of

the United States Holocaust Memorial Council that is building this tremendous museum in Washington, D.C. This is, this is what it's all about. Maybe - and I don't have a monopoly on being involved. We have had, there are thousands and thousands of Jews all over the world.

And I have been on committees in Israel, and my wife and I are fortunate enough to have built a kindergarten, prekindergarten nursery school in a little

town, development town right outside of Haifa. And as important as that is, it's important for our - the Jews in our community to belong to, to all of the agencies, some of the agencies that we were able to support.

And it's given my life a purpose. And it's all - that's why I call this book that I wrote for the kids Cause and Effect. And I am committed. I hope I live many, many years. And I am still committed to supporting these causes, because I remember Niso, and I remember the smoke chimneys, and I remember the bodies. And that was one big price that I have to help.

Q. In what way do you think, right after the war, there was a period perhaps when your faith was shaken by what you had seen? Did it affect your faith at all?

A. No, no, it didn't. That's because I wasn't thinking about it. I was very, very busy with little, little kids around the house.

Q. Were you consciously or unconsciously blocking that experience?

A. I believe that it was an unconscious block. I

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believe that it didn't start until I was about 35, and at that point, I started having nightmares.

Q. You had nightmares?

A. Oh, you bet.

Q. Of the scene?

A. Yes.

Q. Very vivid ones?

A. Yes, yes. And you see, I wasn't a survivor. I was a witness. And yet being a witness, I had written some poetry. And I wrote one poem about, he was on the inside, and I was on the outside. And I have written some more poetry about the Soviet Jews, who are now helping in a big way to get them out of the Soviet.

And I have met them at the bottom of the plane, Fairways in Israel. And I have seen them in Austria, Italy, in these camps. And I have written about them. And this is, this has devoured, engulfed, whatever you think, my while life, and that's why I am here.

Q. In looking back, have you ever thought that because they were on the inside and you were on the outside, that you never had any guilt about the fact that you basically had escaped all that? You were -

A. Guilt? Guilt isn't a strong enough word. And I think psychologically, it made a very big impact. And if you -

Q. What's a better word?

A. A better word than guilt. Guilt being one word, just better get off your duff and do something about

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this, so it will never happen again.

Yes, you feel guilty; feel guilty as hell, that you - that I was there, and they were on the inside, and why, why were they there? Because my grandparents came to the states in the early 1890's and theirs didn't. And it could have been me lying in that pile.

There's a beautiful monument to the deceased and the departed Jews in Yad Veshem, in Jerusalem, Israel. And we have led missions over there. I have been to Israel about roughly 25 trips. And it took me five times, five trips before I could walk into the door into Yad Veshem, where they have memorial services.

I still, or rather my lovely wife still insists or turns off anything that has to do with the Holocaust on TV, because I know what happens to this day. It's still with me.

Q. Do you know, did you know of how many of your relatives, perhaps remote ones, second cousins, aunts, whatever, who were left in the area where your grandparents came from?

A. No, I don't.

Q. Any idea what?

A. No.

Q. Were your wife's parents or grandparents?

A. They were from Rumania.

Q. From Rumania?

A. Yeah, and they lost whoever was left. That's something that you - I know happened, and I don't know

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the names, and I don't know the faces.

And yes, there is a word. Yes, there is a word about it. It takes the place of guilt. And that's faces. Looking at these dead, at the faces of these dead people, these dead Jews.

And Thelma and I went back to Ebensee, about three or four - no, about five years ago. And I wanted to, I wanted to make the visit there for - I had some drive to make it. And we drove from, from Vienna to, into Gemunden. And Thel said, "Well, how are you going to find anything? So I said, "Well, first I will show you the hotel where the - the billet that we had, that we had occupied."

And I said, "It's just around that next block."

And we drove right up to it, and I walked around there. And I didn't ask anyone for directions to the camp, Ebensee. And we drove a half mile to a mile away, and drove up to the camp, up to the site of the camp.

And for some reason, they left the archway in brick, the brick archway. They had taken down the sign erabeiten frei, that work makes you free. So does death. And standing in front of this entrance to a new housing development, there were two younger men, boys, standing there with their bikes.

And I got out of the car alone, and I went over to them. And the only thing I could think of saying was that I - in my German, that I was here during the war, and there was a big camp here. And there was silence.

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And one of these young boys said to me, weiss nicht gud, nicht gud.

The only thing I could say was es fertig. It's finished. We drove then to the cemetery, in this little town, and the only evidence that there was ever a camp there was a half of the crematoria door, way back in the corner of the cemetery.

And I stood there, and I said Kadish, because I had never said it before, and we left there. And I drove as fast as I could to get out of the country. We went to Italy, and I cried for several hours.

Q. Do you have a point of view about present danger frightening you?

A. I am frightened at the unification of Germany. And it's obvious that there's only one reason I am frightened, is because Germans are, are very creative, intelligent, aggressive, and warlike. And I, I just - I would give anything, I would give my life for, for the cause that this would never happen again.

There are good things about it, too, that the countries in the east are getting a touch of freedom, and freedom is something that everybody needs.

Q. Thank you.

A. You are welcome.

Q. It might be nice if we could get a shot of your book there on tape, just so if somebody wanted to try to track it down.

A. Like this?

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Q. Yeah. This is self-published; is that right?

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. And -

A. A single publication of a hundred copies.

Q. A hundred copies. And are they in any libraries around the world? I think the Holocaust Center here would certainly like to have a copy.

A. I will see that they get one.

Q. Okay. You are not going to have that many grandchildren, are you?

A. I think they are through. They are wonderful.

Q. A lot of people think that.

A. I know.

(End of interview.)