

In about six seconds we can start on the EQ.

All right, to finish that story about The Cranes of Ibycus. Well, as I said, I was-- it came back in my memory. It's a long ballad by Schiller. I was able in my mind to recite the whole-- well, I can't do it any longer.

But when I was-- during the war-- well, I got my basic training in Florida and then I was shipped first to Africa and then Italy, France, and Germany. And at the end of the shooting war, I was in Berlin. And I saw Hitler's chancellery all bombed out.

And I went to look at it and I stepped-- I went down his bunker and outside-- he was apparently burned outside. His body was cremated outside. And I must have stepped on his ashes. There were ashes on the ground all over and still the stretchers and the body was carried out.

But anyway, I remember that, strange as it is. Again, I heard while I was walking around it was not the winter but it was May of '45. And again, I saw some cranes or geese. So the story of The Cranes of Ibycus because it came back to me where I saw everything had been-- it turned out the way it did. What else?

How long were you in Berlin after the war? When you went to Berlin, how long had the war been ended?

How long?

Had the war been ended when you went to Berlin?

The armistice was signed in May I believe. It was right afterwards.

So right at the very end of the war you went to Berlin.

Yeah. Yes, when I went to Berlin.

And how long were you in Berlin?

Um, I don't remember. Maybe two, three weeks. I took pictures. I got hold of a camera. I have some pictures of bombed out Berlin and sites in Berlin and so on.

Can you give--

I have them with me.

You have them with you?

Yeah, I have it downstairs in the car. I took it just in case you would ask.

Yeah, we'd like to get--

And in five or six seconds you can begin.

OK, let me start by asking you, you've talked a lot about the things you saw the guards do in Dachau.

Yes.

Were all of them-- like, were most of them sadistic, or were just a few of them sadistic? Or in general, what was the typical guard like?

Some were-- quite a number were sadistic, including that priest that you saw that article, you know? Titus, he was sadistic.

He was? Tell us about him.

People were afraid of him. He beat everybody for minor infractions.

Father Titus Brandsma, how did he get in a position to be cruel?

He was put in charge of some of the groups of the Jewish prisoners. But anyway, a number of them were sadistic, quite sadistic. They themselves were prisoners, Aryan prisoners who were put in charge. But they were quite sadistic.

I'm not talking about those belonging to the SS. Of course, all the SS were sadistic. But not all the Aryan prisoners were sadistic. Some were the most wonderful people I have ever met and I'll never forget. They were very considerate and kind.

Can you remember any names?

No, I don't remember the names. Maybe I have it written down somewhere, but it's too long ago. I don't remember the names. One was-- in civilian life, before he was taken prisoner, he was a carpenter by trade. But he gave us a frequently excellent, good advice and told us how to stay out of trouble and whatnot.

What was some of the advice he gave? Do you recall?

Well, they had a canteen where you could buy things if you had the money.

Camp money?

Yeah, if you had some money. Jews were not permitted to buy much or not at all. And one of the things they sold in the canteens was butter and lemon. And he told me to help the healing process of the frostbite to eat butter and lemon. And I took the chance and acquired some butter and lemon.

Now, that was very risky. I hid the butter very carefully under my bunk. If that would have been found, it would have been-- it wouldn't have helped me cure my wounds, it would have been the end of my life. But it helped. It was true. It was quite noticeable, the effects of eating lemon and butter. Yeah.

Well, also he told us to keep a low profile. Don't make yourself-- just don't make yourself noticeable if you can avoid it. That's just some of the advice.

Do you recall anybody else who was good to you?

Yes, there was another prisoner An Aryan prisoner. He was just-- I don't know what he was in private life. Also had some trade. He was very fine person. And talking about the characters of people, even amongst the Jewish prisoners there were some impossible people. They were fighting among themselves. They were stealing.

And strange as it is, some of them were-- in civilian life, some of them were highly respected people. There were lawyers, scientists, but they behaved like beasts among themselves. And others, just plain ordinary people, they had fine characters.

And among the prisoners, there were all kinds of people coming from all walks of life. Among the Aryans that were Gypsies. With me there was the mayor of Vienna. There were some aristocrats, well-known aristocrats, and other well-known politicians or scientists. But the character of the people showed up in this kind of situation. The true character had nothing to do with their education or their background.

You brought some articles about Bruno Bettelheim.

Oh yeah, well, it's just an article of his when he died just recently. And I just saved it because he was with me in the same barrack. He didn't know me, I didn't know him, and I was not in touch with him while he was living in the United States. But it's just I saved it for my own interest. I just happen to know that he was one of the prisoners in my group.

Are all the articles in here about Titus Brandsma?

No, these are newspaper articles telling about some of the people that got executed after Dachau was liberated.

Did you ever testify in a war crimes trial?

No.

Were there any good guards would you say? Like sometimes I've heard survivors talk about good guards.

I don't believe there were any good guards. They couldn't have been good guards because they wouldn't have been guards. They were selected to just demean people, which mean characters were selected for that type of duty.

What was the worst guard? Do you recall any worst guard?

Well, they were all alike. Quite mean.

This piece of paper here, is this a poem that you wrote?

I didn't write that poem. This is a poem that somebody wrote about the peat bogs. You know, Dachau was built on a-- the place where Dachau was, there used to be a peat bog at one time-- marshes, peat-- and you still could find it there and around there. Not in Dachau itself but around the area. They used the peat for fuel material, you know, dried peat.

Should I go ahead and read it, John?

Yes please.

Height would mean a sure death. Facing guns and barbed wire greet our view. But for us there is no complaining. Winter will, in time, be passed. One day we shall cry rejoicing. Homeland dear, you're mine at last. Chorus.

We are the peat bog soldiers. We are marching with our spades to the bog far and wide as the eye can wander. Health and bog are everywhere. Not a bird sings out to cheer us. Oaks are standing gaunt and bare. Chorus. Up and down the guards are pacing. No one can-- no one. No one can go through.

This is a translation from the German. I don't remember the German words.

It must have been a song. Do you remember the tune?

No.

Was there very much creativity that you saw going on? Writing or singing or, you know, making up songs, poems?

No. We could, in our spare time, amuse ourselves with playing chess. We made our own chess boards and figures. That I remember. But the only other thing I told you was these prayer meetings that I attended. I don't remember any kind of creativity.

Whatever happened to that rabbi who held the prayer meetings? Do you know?

That rabbi I mentioned? I don't know what happened to him. I don't know. He came to the United States I believe. He was a well known name. Twerski, Rabbi Twerski.

This is a list of your relatives?

Oh yeah. Apparently, yes. I wrote to them at the inquiry. I wrote to the agency inquiring about if they would know any of those. But these newspaper articles tells you about the execution.

Yeah, we're going to make copies of them if that's OK with you.

Mm-hmm.

That's a list of names.

Yeah. No, Bettelheim is not on it. And I believe, I'm not too sure, this Kurt Adler was the San Francisco Symphony conductor. Kurt Herbert Adler.

Oh yeah, Kurt Adler.

Yeah, I believe that's him. He was in Dachau.

When you arrived in Dachau, were prisoners lining the fence shouting out names and places to see if you knew anyone?

Well, no. But I myself had tried to maintain-- find them and get in contact through any of those who came in and also those who left. I mean, for my own, I maintained a contact with the outside world. So any of those prisoners who came in and those who left the camp before me, if I possibly could, I asked them to pass on some information to my relatives.

Did you ever find out if they succeeded in doing that?

Not really, no. I don't remember that.

When you were at home and you were picked up, was your father taken with you, or were you the only one?

My father was not at home. I was at home. My mother was sick in bed. It was my stepmother. And one of my stepsister was at home. But they just took me.

How did the-- who came to get you? How many SS officers came?

It was just-- I don't remember. Either one or two local policemen who had the duty to do that, you know?

Did you know them?

No.

How did they treat you when they picked you up?

Well, just like officially, you know? Police, that's what they had to do. Come with us.

Do you think they had any idea what would happen to you?

Yeah. Yes, I did. Because-- I mean, it became known right away all this is taking place.

Did you try to hide.

No. Couldn't hide. I couldn't. I was never courageous or whatever. And we were very poor. We didn't have any money. You know, sometimes it takes courage. Sometimes it takes money. Didn't have any of it.

You were 28. Were you married at the time?

No.

Did you have a girlfriend? Were you planning to be married?

No.

Were you able to maintain contact with friends and family at all?

In Dachau?

While you were there or while you were at the jail before they took you there?

No. Once I came to Dachau we were permitted to write home. I showed you the correspondence. I know one postcard, the first postcard, it was a small postcard, it took me more than an hour to write it because my hands were so badly frozen.

Did you have to write what they told you to write?

We were told what to write and what not to write. Yeah, basically, you know, we got some instructions. The letters were censored. They were not-- each and every letter was censored.

Did they ever beat anybody up because of what they wrote?

Because it was?

Of what they wrote or tried to write home?

I don't know. It's possible. I would say most likely.

What was the most common punishment?

Solitary confinement and hanging from the tree, from a post. Yeah, or just plain beating.

Did you lose your ability to feel from what you saw and experienced in Dachau?

Did I lose?

Your ability to feel.

No.

Like to have compassion, that sort of thing.

No. You know, I told you about this German poet Schiller who wrote that. There was another well-known poet Goethe. Goethe, in his lifetime, he once went on a trip to Italy. He was thrilled by what he saw by the beautiful countryside and he made a statement. Now, what did he say? I've forgotten. I guess-- Naples. He was impressed by Naples. It's worse to go and see Naples and then die, you know?

It's worse to go and see Naples?

Naples. Before you-- and after which if you die, it's all right as long as you have seen Naples before your death. I mean, he was so-- when I came out of Dachau, I thought of what Goethe said and I said to people, I don't regret that I was in Dachau as long as I was able to survive. And I said, instead of saying to see Naples and die, I said, to see Dachau and live, that was worse. I don't know if you get the connection.

I'm not sure. Could you explain a little more?

Well, when people ask me after I came out-- what was it that you asked me, whether I developed some-- what? Feelings?

If you lost your ability to feel.

No, well, I don't know why in response to what you asked I said when people ask me what my reaction was of having been in Dachau, I remember what similar something Goethe had to say about seeing Naples. I said to see Dachau, it was worth it, I don't regret it, as long as I was able to live through it, to survive. In other words, see Dachau and live. Instead of saying see Naples and die, see Dachau and live.

But you don't regret it since you lived?

No, I did not regret that this happened to me.

Why not?

Well, it happened not to me. It happened to others. And I was glad I was a witness to it. And that's why I don't regret it and I don't mind talking about it to you and to others. But as long as I was able to come out of it alive and well without-- of course, it must have left some marks on my life and so on.

Can you think of any?

I don't know. I think I became-- I don't know. I'm sure it must have had some effect on my personality, but I cannot analyze it exactly. But it stands to reason. Anybody who comes out of Vietnam or out of Dachau, it had some effect on people. I didn't sit down to analyze it that accurately.

What was your first day at Dachau like?

That I don't remember. I guess scary.

Did you try to smuggle any money or jewels sort of through processing?

To smuggle it when?

When you were entering into Dachau.

You cannot smuggle in anything. It would be suicide. But what for? Did anybody-- did you hear of cases where anybody succeeded in smuggling? And for what purpose? To bribe the guard? I don't know.

Yeah, I've heard of cases where people did--

Were there some who could do it?

Yeah. Yeah, they were occasionally. That's what the organizing was all about.

Yeah, I don't know. I didn't know. I had nothing anyway. I was very poor. Talking about smuggling, well, I was very

poor when I left-- when I was put on the train to leave Europe after Dachau, you know? And I just had among my belongings mostly some papers from school papers that I thought I would need, would come in-- would be useful to me later on. That's about all. I had hardly anything to wear.

But my mother gave me a silver fork. That was the biggest item-- valuable of any value and I hid it somewhere in my trunk. The trunk was not with me. It was on a different car. But before we left the border from Germany to enter-- stop?

Yeah, he's got to change the tape again.