

And we are back 10 seconds. OK.

OK. All right. So I was talking about Dr. [? Lavacheck ?] and his family. And they're very caring and very supportive, simply because they also understood, related to the predicament we were in.

And so they're very eager to help, and they were the ones who were the major suppliers of all the things which they sent to me, which included medication, which certainly helped me to save my father's life because of his dysentery and whatever. Because some medication which countervail whatever dysentery and all that.

And so I was able to get many of the things which helped him because he was beginning to get into bad shape and anyone who was at that particular time. He was 44 years old, 44. And when you are 44, you were already an old person in a concentration camp.

I mean, an old person, which was a very interesting thing, which, by the way, I want to bring up that I'm very dismayed about the fact that not enough research has been done with survivors, particularly from a medical point of view because I think much could be learned. Much could be learned and had been totally neglected. And for reasons which escape me because it's either unbelievable ignorance or indifference or whatever.

And anyway, because of some of the things which I've noticed the way people responded to infections in extreme stress situations and deprivation and all that. Anyway, so he was in that particular predicament that he was on the verge of dying. He was actually in a sick barrack, as I was also for a while.

And that was a deadly situation because they had periodic selections and selected those people who were in such bad shape that they could not be used as workers anymore. And they send them to Auschwitz, where they can now gas them. And--

He slept out of the sick bay.

Yeah. Out of the sick's bay, yeah. In the sick's bay, yeah. Sick barrack. And so my father was in-- particularly towards the end, when it no longer mattered, because then, they didn't send them anymore because the Russians were already their own-- they had other problems.

So they weren't going to send people to sick bay anymore?

No, no, no. From the sick bay to Auschwitz to gas people, because they had stopped doing that. It was no longer-- they destroyed things and all that towards the end of '44, end of '44, summer '44. They still were doing up to summer '44. They'd still be gassing people and in large quantities, numbers.

So I was able to get that through with medication and food stuff and all sorts of preparation which give you some energy and all this and that. And so I was able to share that with him. These people had access to this material. And what this fellow got and said, well, what can we do for you so that you continue these services, you know, they go between.

And he was collecting stamps or something else, so they gave him stamps or whatever things like that. So that there'd be something in for him as well.

Yes. I was going to ask what his motivation was.

Well, his motivation was partially compassion and also, trying to get something for him because he was also be deprived. I mean, the deprivation there, too. So I mean, I wouldn't hold it against him. I met him after the war.

What's his name?

I forget. I forget. And I've met him. I made a point in meeting him after the war. And we got some jewelry back, the

least significant jewelry. Just for example, in a tie needles-- whatever you call it-- tie pins, things of that need. And so I gave him with ruby and all that. So I gave him a tie pin after the war and all that. I just said, I don't want it. But he was very happy to get.

Is he a prisoner of war or what? What was--

No, he was a Czech worker. Just that was a-- so they rounded up instead of sending them to war because they didn't send them to war, Czechs, unless they were a special group of people or whatever. And viewed by the SS as acceptable. And it's a very small number of Czechs who would have been used by the Nazis. And sent into the SS.

So they used all workers, all over occupied Europe and sent them to important industries, war industries and rounded them up. They didn't have a choice not to go, except the conditions were much better in concentration camps, but they're still rather inhuman and very confined and hard and all that because the Russians were bad and all this. But I mean, still, it was much better than what people suffered in concentration camps.

Was it difficult for this family that was sending the goods? Was it difficult to get those goods at that time.

Oh, yeah, of course. But I mean, they were well connected. So many of the things which were perhaps not as easy for other people to obtain, they were able to and therefore did what they could. And I had a very close relationship with them, and I still have. One of the daughter-- they all are dead. That one daughter committed suicide after the war. And the other, the parents of these two girls died of old age in Vienna.

They had to leave Czechoslovakia because they are viewed as select Germans and therefore, are wanted because they all deported. And then they went to-- so they went to Vienna and the tragic situation. OK.

How about how often did you get a package?

Oh, quite-- every two weeks or so, three weeks. Quite frequently and periodically. And that was mainly decide the difference. It was not enough, I mean, obviously. But it did decide the difference. All right. Now, then the other thing with the shoes. I woke up and saw that my shoes were gone. Well, then I mean, that's the end you know.

So I went to the barrack and looked for my shoes because someone had stolen them. And they are shoes which they had sent to me, too, which were leather shoes which was unheard of. And they turned out to be a curse, another blessing. Later on, that's March, because they pretty much contributed towards the fact that I had frozen feet because once leather shoes get wet and soaked and freeze, they are much worse than the canvas actually. Anyway, so--

How did you find shoes?

Well I want-- I just saw them. Someone had taken them and put them-- they didn't put them up-- put them under the bunk. And so I just took them and retrieve them. But that was while all the other people slept. And people slept there, not just like you wake up very easily. You know. But somehow, I woke up because I sort of sense-- because if I had not, it would have been-- could have meant death.

You would have been no shoes.

No shoes.

What had happened to your canvas shoes?

I didn't have the canvas shoes.

You didn't have any.

No, no. I just gave them to someone else or whatever and just use those instead.

If say, the camp guards had seen you with these shoes, would that have been a problem?

No. It was not a problem for some reason. Because obviously, they could see me, but they didn't look at it. But no, no. We certainly haven't had any problems.

Wasn't it a problem, generally, if say, you got these special things and other prisoners would try to steal them?

Well, we had to be very careful. And of course, I kept quiet about it. And I only had a buddy, and he knew about it because I confided in him. And I talked to him, and he wanted to somehow join in on the spoils without contributing anything at all. I said, well, let's have kind of a group, be part of a group to support each other.

And well, that was very nice for him, but he had nothing to contribute. So it was not in our interest. And my father said, don't be crazy. Don't do it. He's not going to contribute. And we don't have that much to share. And so we did.

Well, as you alluded to before that it was understood that if prisoners stole from each other, this was a capital crime.

Yeah.

And how was this capital crime affected?

Well, I mean, they'll beat you to death.

Was it just that there was a designated group that would do this, sir?

Well, not as a designated group. But I mean, there would be an outrage. And so that if you say, well, you done this and that. And other people say, they would join in, simply because they're around. Because that was totally-- it was a taboo. And that happened in Dacchau the same thing in that regard. Which camp? That was a Soviet prisoner of war, a young kid who tried to escape was caught

And instead of being sent back to a Stalag, he was sent to Dacchau. And poor fellow, he was hungry and all that, just like anyone else, but he just apparently came from back home where you just simply go and steal. He was caught stealing from a fellow inmate. He was beaten to death. It was the end of him. I remember that. And so the other thing, same thing, you know, same thing. That was absolutely unacceptable.

Okay, so I don't know what to say about any other. About Blechhammer except this sort of air raids were very deadly because we were not permitted to go into any shelters, air raid shelters. And had to simply be in their cellars of normal buildings. And I remember that some of the things just bombed and collapsed. And I remember when I only used the time to sleep because that's what I needed most.

So I slept through these things and because we were unobserved and all that. And that was the only freedom I enjoyed tremendously because I was not bothered by anyone. And I use that time. And some other people prayed and had the jitters I just didn't because I just didn't concern me very much.

So I lay down and slept, hoped for the best. And one time, there was a tremendous noise and all that. And I could see a hole through the wall. Side wall and bomb come through and just get stuck. It doesn't explode. I could see it coming, boop-sh. And it didn't explode.

What a luck.

Well, I don't know at times. That's another thing. So some people say well, you're lucky that you survived. And you know, I mean, that's a question I don't know. And it's something which is-- at times, I'm not so sure that this could be defined as luck. But under the circumstances-- and we will be talking about it when we wrap up the thing because I have a few things to say about that.

Well, what about your father's life during this period--

My father's life, he had a much more difficult life than I. And that's why he was somehow also aging more rapidly and was more prone to catch things and disease, susceptible to disease, by virtue of the fact that his major job was to carry cement sacks that's dreadfully heavy. And dreadful work, you know, and all that.

And so I had much, physically, much easier work, except I was under very strict supervision, and I already said that. So that's what my father's job was.

What about he had technical skills--

Well, he didn't, you see. And he didn't have any technical skill. He would have wound up if he had stayed alive. He would have been a bank executive, which he was already. I mean, he's senior back then.

But I thought he had [INAUDIBLE].

But he-- well, I mean, yeah. Well, I mean, he was quite capable of working with his hands, and did some gardening back in Prague when it was nothing else he could do. So he was employed as in a gardener kind of thing. You learn this. So I wish to god he would have come to my place and did some work, but-- [CHUCKLES] which he didn't do.

But he didn't have any real skills in this regard, except that he could work as a laborer-- as unskilled labor. And whatever he said, I forget actually what he said. Because what can you do? So he must have said something was just a straight lie. Because they wanted to have people with very specific skills which would fit into this ? syn fuel plant, this big, big thing there.

So I forget what he actually claimed to be-- whatever. So they used him for whatever he could do, which was just schlepping these cement sacks. And so he was totally exhausted. Also, we didn't stay. We were not able to be in one barrack together. So he was in a different barrack.

Could you meet up?

Oh, we met. You know, of course we met very frequently. And that was possible.

What was the food like in Blechhammer?

Well, the food was slightly better, but not significantly so. The quality was a bit better. Than soup was a bit more substantive, although it was also turnip and all that. It was just a little bit more. And then we are able to occasionally get some things from other people, maybe, who worked and all that, and steal lots, you know, and like [INAUDIBLE]. And--

You mean, like, the cabbage?

Yeah, this sort of thing, and then be alert if after an air raid, you would find a few things. Like, I found a full thing. It was just like a [INAUDIBLE]-- just find a knapsack, you know, the knapsack with all the stuff in it. And--

What about washing and toilet facilities there?

Well, the toilet facilities were much better, because there was really some place where you could go, and wash up, and all that, which did not exist at all back in Auschwitz-Birkenau. And also, the toilets were much different. Because Auschwitz-Birkenau, I'll never forget the toilets, which were just rows of holes which people sat by in the dozens. And the place was infested with all sorts of crawling things, white worms, whatever they were, and just awful stuff. And you couldn't really wipe anything, you know-- just awful stuff.

And in Blechhammer and it was apparently a little bit more able to wash up and be clean. And the problem of vermin was not quite as acute there as it was in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Were you able to keep warm?

Well, I think it was-- I think we had better chances to get blankets and things than-- it was better than back in Auschwitz-Birkenau or something. And so I can remember that the bunks were pretty much the same, except I think we've had better straw mats, sacks, whatever they were, and filled with straw, and blankets which were a bit superior than what we've had back there.

Did you have any days off?

Sunday.

You did? What could you do for amusement?

Amusement?

Mm-hmm.

Well, amusement was none, actually, so to speak. We just simply tried to relax, and come to, and all that. And occasionally, there is some people with a great deal of initiative who gave performances to which even SS came, because they felt that they themselves didn't have any [INAUDIBLE]. And some of these things were, of course, performed by professionals, and had a very high level of sophistication.

And since you've mentioned that, it was something which was had very important ramifications later on for me personally, was for other people who remember that, as well as for that person himself, who was an SS person, who-- all the SS, they all came to these sort of performances. And in one particular instance, one person who actually had the SD, so he was really into SD room and all that, he just-- after performance, he stood up and said in public-- in front of all the SS people and all the inmates-- and said, we always are told that you are subhuman, and whatever, vermin, all that. And people who, under those circumstances, can give such a performance deserve our respect. And he said that in public.

And then he disappeared. And I said, well, that's the end of him. But no, it was not the end of him. And when I was a witness-- supposed to be a witness in the so-called Blechhammer trial, where I was an official witness-- except it never came to it that I was called in and all that-- but I had to testify. And here in San Francisco, the Consul was just a real SOB, you know? And you could see that the man was a Nazi, you know, and just really resentful, and treated me like a-- if I had been some sort of a criminal.

And so this fellow then was during the Blechhammer trial-- which, apparently, none of these people really survived. He was one of the few who survived. Because they all-- "Tom Mix" got killed, which comes to me as some sort of-- as a relief. Because, I mean, I'm not particularly bloodthirsty individual, but I think he certainly got what he was-- what was coming to him. Anyway--

How did he get killed?

Somehow in combat or whatever. And so this fellow didn't, and that got him off the hook. So he was actually in the trial and accused of whatever they said. But then he said, I've said this and that and there are witnesses and all that. Apparently found witnesses in my testimony also. And he was not sentenced to anything.

Did he receive any punishment by the SS at the time?

That I don't know because I always wanted to meet the fellow. And I worked very closely with Ludwigsburg, as a matter of fact, the person in charge, the attorney in charge of the whole outfit which is to find people who committed

crimes against humanity. The attorney in charge. Well no, not a-- What do you call the attorney who in chooses people? I don't know that.

You don't mean like a district attorney?

District attorney type of thing, something like that. So he was in something like that except in charge of all the things. So I came there to do some research and look into the archives, and I got to know him and said, you have to look at this. And then just didn't want to let me go or something. He came out with a number of interesting very important books, some of which have been translated into a English. A man called [? Rickel, ?] [? Rickarol. ?] Very interesting man.

So I went with him. He was under protection all the time. It's just interesting because a lot of attempts to kill him or whatever. So I've been through that with him. And because he told me all these stories and I had to work in his office with him directly and looking into the file and all that. It was very helpful. Died, unfortunately. Died of old age more than anything, I guess.

So then I found out from these files that this man was let off the hook simply because-- This was known and obviously I was not the only one witness that remembered that of those survivors, which I think is terrific. I really think it's terrific.

Was he known for--

No, he was not. No, no. He didn't do anything. And I talked to a number of people and observed a lot of SS officers and how they-- And with the exception-- It was terrible. Some assisted in the hanging of people and some of the weekly hangings-- Well, actually not every week but most of the week someone was there and hanged. And then they read the whole thing and then they just said, OK, and then they hang them. They had some very strange type of strings, ropes or whatever, and they broke and then they hang them again. And they broke again and you know. And this sort of thing was terrible to watch.

And most of the people they hanged were very brave. And that's something which I won't forget. They also just went into their death head high and then addressed the crowd of inmates, this is to survive. You will survive. Don't let yourself be-- I was terribly impressed with that just for us to see that, to be forced to see that.

And There is Tom Mix, you know, just anyone who wanted to hide in the barracks to avoid watching it, so he was getting them out and shooting at them and all that with pistol drawn. And I escaped his threats for reasons which are-- All right.

Well, what was this particular play that the inmates put on?

Well, it was a cabaret. It was kind of a cabaret type of thing on camp life and which parodied the life, including SS and all that. It was highly incredibly sophisticated and very impressive.

Sounds very daring.

Oh, yeah. It was very daring. But in a way which was very amusing to the SS and they just took it in, just thought it was great.

How else could you pass your time?

Well, pass your time what you did is you didn't pass your time because you just talked about pass your time. People are exhausted. They slept. I mean, what do you do? You just go around a little bit maybe the camp premises and talk to some friends and all that. Yes, that was done. And people you knew. But there was so little energy left. So that if there is any time, we've got any time to spare and all that, you went and slept or organized some food or just so it could be had and talk to friends. That's it, period.

How would you organize food?

I tell you already.

The cabbage I know, but what else?

Oh. Well, just simply see where were you-- Well, my father did one thing, for example. You know that some SS people through some inmates that they bought gold or something. So my father went to a dentist, had his gold fillings, one filling or two fillings, removed, and gave it to this inmate. And he gave it to the SS, and then they got a piece of bread and that's why we had some bread, which was his contribution to our things. And that's what he did. And it was very bad because my father died with false teeth, and he had the best teeth in the world. I mean, he was 40. During that particular time. He had just healthy strong teeth which hardly had any fillings, with just a few of these gold. And that gold he removed to sell for bread.

OK, so that's one device he did. And then what I did, just made contacts with people who had more than you had and trade and organize, which included stealing. Oh, what I did too was just stole some things after air raids, removed it from air raids, which was, of some value to some people and sold it for a piece of bread.

This was kind of necessary. There's dual morality where it was quite OK to steal from anybody except your peers.

That's right. There was no problem with stealing from-- Now in Theresienstadt that there was another thing which I thought was very interesting. The gendarmes, which were very close to where I stayed, they had their barracks, which of course are very different. And in the windows they had sausage hanging. So some people went and stole the sausage. I was tempted to do that, but at that time, I was not somehow pushed far enough to do it. I thought about it back in Theresienstadt, and I should have done it and I didn't. I could have, and I didn't do it.

But then Blechhammer and Auschwitz and all that, then I said, hey, there was no question anymore. So you had a gradual sort of demoralization of the mundane morality, change in your mundane morality into the camp morality, and that was very different from the mundane everyday morality. And that's what I did. AND then I had absolutely no problem stealing, as long as it was not from a fellow inmate. But of course, then we've had back in Dachau, if you could see that a person was a goner and not going to live, then you just try to be around him just like a vulture, just like a hyena or whatever some animals who wait until someone dies so that you can take. That was acceptable

Like the Muslim men you were talking about.

Well, yeah. Particularly people who just about to croak. And then you just saw to it that you were around them and actually nursed them to their end so that you would inherit whatever may have been left, which may have been part of a ration or something they no longer could eat.

When they reached, the Muslim, that stage, did they go and get their food on the list?

Someone got it for them, which was. Someone else had to and just and gave it to them and sometimes didn't. I wouldn't have done that, but it was done.

So they would have died more quickly if they weren't sustained by other people.

But some people couldn't, that's right. But some people simply collected and didn't give it to them and just at it themselves and all that because they couldn't defend themselves.

Then there was an important incident when I had some sort of-- I still have the marks on my leg. Because of the shoes I've then had the canvas shoes, and the severe winter, they were rubbing against the skin and all that, of course no socks or anything, just pieces of rags which were filthy, lice-ridden or infected, rubbed against the skin. And so combination with frost and infection, I wound up with a leg wound which was so infected that I just couldn't walk anymore and I was accepted in the sick bay.

And the sick bay was run by I don't know what. I forget. A Polish Jew or French Jew. I just forget. I don't know why I didn't put it down when I still remember.

Could it be Belgian?

Yeah, could be. I just forget some of the things. And so he treated the people who were already dying of malnutrition in putting a suction thing and bleeding them so that put things on them, leech-like things, suction cups. They didn't have leeches, but suction cups. And just absolute sadist. And worked hand in hand with the SS and designated those people who were to be selected and sent into gas. And he was an inmate.

And somehow he took some liking to me and he let me be there. And somehow then there was another sort of male nurse there and he just was very protective of me and all that. So they nursed me so that I was OK again and all that. Nothing happened and I was kind of given special attention and all that. And that happened because I don't know why. It just simply happened. And other people he just virtually killed.

So it was a situation where nobody would go to sick bay unless they were desperate.

Oh, absolutely. Because he was deadly thing, a deadly game. Because you didn't know whether you would ever come out. But I had no option because I simply couldn't, I was just no longer in a position to walk. They did all for me that I could. And the whole thing healed. And that's precisely the thing, that under certain situations people had types of infectious disease and all that which are not normal conditions people don't survive. In concentration camps they did, and he just beats me. And the type of research which has been neglected is inexcusable.

How do you understand that?

I don't. I don't have the expertise. But I really think that the only thing is the drive of self-preservation or that your defensive system or whatever is so mobilized that it countervailed all the other things much more than other normal conditions. But that's a social/psychological explanation and not a medical one. But yeah, just unbelievable. Things which you normally don't survive, disease, they survived. On the other hand, some people died within a day, just like my second cousin or whatever, Dr. Peter Schleissner. And he had the [INAUDIBLE] on the nose. And one day he comes to see me and says, how are you and all this and all that. And next day he's dead. So I said, what happened? He's not coming, I didn't see him. He died within 24 hours.

But I had pneumonia, I had pleurisy, I had a typhus, I had a jaundice. You name it, I've had it. And I survived for reasons which escape me why. People die here under normal conditions of pneumonia, and through some combination of that. And then I contracted tuberculosis as well. That I only found out after the liberation because we were given x-rays.

So how long were you in Dachau?

Well it was just about 3/4 of a year I would imagine. Yeah. No, probably more. Actually more, probably. No, 3/4 of a year. Because I was shipped to Auschwitz-Birkenau '43, was there for about eight months. Yeah, just about that. And again you see all the inaccuracies. And that's what people, revisionists say, oh, it's inaccurate and all this because you didn't have calendars there. You only went by this season. And so the timing was exceedingly difficult.

And in retrospect it is going to reflect on saying things which are inaccurate, very inaccurate in terms of time, perception. All right, when it came to the end of Blechhammer then we heard already the Russians advancing. And then they rounded us up and said, OK, those so you can stay who just can't walk. And my father was in a position where he just simply was at that time in the sick bay, and nothing very much could happen to him at that time because they no longer were selected, as I said before, and sent to the gas chambers to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

And so I had that chance, of course, I had a choice because I was totally in a position to hide and all that and could have. And I had to make a decision. Am I going to risk that they will kill us because we counted pretty much on the fact that they would wipe us out before they let us fall into the hands of the Russians? Or am I going to join the majority who still



were able to walk and start the death march?

And then I talked it over with my father, and I don't know what he really said to me, but he couldn't. He couldn't come. And then I said, well I probably instead of staying with him, I said, I'll probably walk. And it was the biggest mistake that could have possibly made. Because he was liberated by the Russians and freed so many months before I was. And I had to go through the death march, the boxcar to Dachau which took about 10 days or 2 weeks or something of that nature. And then Dachau itself until the liberation, which was quite a few months. So I made the wrong decision and that saved his life because otherwise he would have not survived the death March, no way.

Of course, how can you know?

Of course. Yeah, but-- No, I couldn't. Now some people got killed. Because some people got killed, shot by the SS and all that. But he was not and he was able to survive and come through and got on his feet very quickly because of food and help, Russians, Soviets, whatever. And so we went on the death march--

I think I'd like to stop you. Start with that fresh next time you let anybody ask questions.

OK, great.

How about you?

Just two brief questions. Was German the most common language used between the various ethnic groups?

No. Depends on the region and what was-- Auschwitz-Birkenau, depending with whom you were, Auschwitz-Birkenau, because these people came primarily from Czechoslovakia and-- In that particular B2 family camp, so the most common language was Czech, German Czech because most of them were actually from from that people. And in Blechhammer, for example, most of the people, work detail and all that, they were I worked with Belgians, I worked with French Jews, Belgian Jews. But the majority I think were Polish and so Polish it was probably more frequently spoken than many other languages.

But I mean you found always enough people to speak whatever language you wanted to or you were more familiar with, I should say.

You spoke German and Czechoslovakian?

Yeah. And then I've learned in these godforsaken places to speak Yiddish, which I had no absolutely no knowledge of. But I picked it up in the camp.

What was the status of the inmates who took the jobs of barber, Sonderkommando, those type of jobs? How were they looked upon?

Well, they were just viewed as something in between the SS and an enemy. They were viewed certainly as depending on how they behaved. And since most of them misused their power and made the lives of those whom they supervised more difficult and were very frequently very cruel individuals, they were hated. And people couldn't defend themselves against them because they had the power and could enforce it. So they are hated, and feared, obviously.

You want to--

Yeah, I've got a couple of short questions. I wondered if you happen to recall any of the poems from Theresienstadt.

Not offhand I don't. No, not offhand. Not offhand, no. I have published some of them, but even at school I had problems remembering poems. And I just always had an ordeal when I was in primary school and we had to go front and recite and I was just absolutely miserable. Must have been pretty comical, to be sure, but I suffered.

There's a Swiss psychotherapist named Alice Miller who's written a bunch of books about child psychology. And she's written one book in which she has a very long chapter on Hitler and German child-rearing practices of the 19th century. She quotes at length from child-rearing manuals that she said were common in households of the day. And there is a very severe and sadistic tone in these manuals, a tone in which parents are counseled to be abusive to children and beat them and be severe. And this author's theory is that these child-rearing practices of the 19th century in Germany and Austria helped to create Nazi culture in adults who were acting out some sort of compensation for this abuse as children. And it sounds a little glib when you summarize it in one sentence, but when you read her theory in detail it's fairly persuasive. I wondered if you were familiar with it.

Well, I haven't read that particular thing, but I'm familiar with that notion and that the various theories from other sources. And I have very mixed feelings about it because I don't think we can generalize that first of all. Just in Hitler's case it's certainly very true, and from other sources which you'd be familiar with, that he was beaten virtually every day by his father and all that. But not because it was manuals but also there's a difference in terms of, again, she not being a sociologist, she doesn't know that there are different practices depending what class you belong to, what social class you belong to.

So I think it's just absolute baloney to think that the severity was just universal. It was not. It was particularly the lower classes. That was more prevalent. But middle class is absolutely not. Because for example I have a whole book which goes back into the early 19th century, which has been translated from German into Czech, about child-rearing practices. It's an original book, and all that, which is not known, but then was very popular, where you have the most liberal psychologically insightful advice you can possibly find which even has is very direct application for today.

And that was for the more educated people who could read because they uneducated people didn't read these sort of things. And so I would totally reject a universal sort of thing. I would certainly look into it and say, yes, the lower classes had this sort of punitive tendency which I think I would certainly agree that certainly-- and Hitler falls into that category.

Now middle class is very much more enlightened and much more humanistic and pedagogy was very different. So I think we just simply cannot-- Now the idea is that, indeed, if you said, well where did these sadistic SS people come from? Well, they came from most of the low classes because and they jumped to the occasion that they could get a lot of power. Just like today we have cops. Cops don't have to have any education and a bachelor's degree, they just go to police academies. They don't learn very much at all except training something.

And so SS jump to that and other people. They just couldn't write properly, their language was lousy, unpolished, what have you. And that's known. These people were low-class people. Low-class people. One I've interviewed, and I have stacks of letters written, I mean just unbelievable this by itself would make a book-- was so-called the Hangman of Buchenwald, interviewed and also taped interviews. And he told me over the years, because I was the only one who showed interest in him, so he was very thankful, grateful, and he was never to get out because he was-- If there had been a death sentence in Germany they would have sentenced him to death.

So this fellow had no education, was one of the most powerful people. Relatively high non-commissioned officer rank in Buchenwald. And he was the lowest of the low, class-wise. Low class. I mean bottom of the barrel.

SS were not necessarily lower class.

I'm trying to tell you yes. Yes. Most of them were low-class people, particularly in these sort of outfits. Not in terms of the military branch of the SS, but this type of camp and death head, low class. No question. And I have in my book statistics in terms of the percentage of where they came from. And it's in my book, which is SS statistics, not mine. Official SS by the official SS statistician.

You're not talking about the leadership, you're talking about the people who are running the camps.

Right. But even those who became officers, they're not necessarily educated people at all and low class also. I mean there was 1% of people who went further than high school. 1%. And I've got that in my book. It's all there. And it's not

my statistics, it's the official statistics gathered by SS statisticians, official SS statisticians and restricted to those who have a need to know.

OK. One last question. There was another Holocaust movie that was released a couple of years ago called Triumph of the Spirit about a boxer in Auschwitz. And I was just going to ask you if you'd seen the movie and if you could tell us to what extent it was an accurate or inaccurate portrayal of life in Auschwitz. I don't think I've seen it. No. A boxer?

About a man in Auschwitz who had been a championship boxer as a boy or a teenager and who became a boxer performer in the camp as his way of surviving.

I haven't seen that. Now most of all what I'm trying to do to the article about some of my whatever things I'm trying to do in the Press-Democrat, I got a lot of responses, and one of the responses was a lady whose brother was one of the liberators and a official army information officer of sorts and apparently who had something to do with a documentary which they took after the liberation. And so there are unbelievable factual things which are available.

And even the material which was taken by SS during the war, and I've seen some. One of them was on the Lodz ghetto, which we've seen on the Lodz ghetto, and there was actual footage where I recognized people I'd interviewed, one of them in particular. And I think those things should be used, that's my view, for teaching purposes, information purposes, rather than movies which have been done by people who have not done adequate research and distort the situation, which starts with Holocaust, one of the major first movie. It was called Holocaust.

Unbelievable inaccuracies and all that, just distortions, and just write down this information I think doesn't serve any purpose because people are ignorant as it is. And just to inform them in a way which will further distort the wrong idea, I think-- So I work with these things, have been for years now, trying to make documentaries which are based on some factual stuff. And there are also movies which are, for example, Wannsee Conference, which came out. First-rate stuff because it's beautifully documented.

But it's usually done by Germans because they know what is what. If it was done by some Hollywood thing, then the chances are that it's distorted and highly inaccurate. So you've got this and that. And I say we have lots of movies which are actual documentaries, why not use those instead or some--

Unless we know that some are really good, there is no substitute for something which we don't have which was not filmed and all that like the documentary on the Wannsee Conference. But I mean the way it was put together, and I just have read very carefully Wannsee protocol, and some of the things the way it is done, I think, is pretty interesting. probably not 100% accurate, obviously, because how do you know something where you've not been and it's not enough to go by. But I think it's very persuasive, some of this stuff.

And I've seen some, and I worked on another one which is based on Heydrich many years ago, for which I didn't get the recognition I should have, but that's beside the point, and that was psychologically and otherwise just fantastic. Except it was taken out of-- I tried to get it brought here into the United States with the synchronized whatever, and for some reason, they didn't do it. But I thought it was a very excellent, very accurate portrayal of Heydrich. And I looked into Heydrich's situation quite a bit myself in going back to his relatives and trying to find out what I could, and I thought it was very well done. So you've got this and that. So I haven't seen this one you mentioned. That's it.

I just wanted you to specifically say the dates that were added. You said that you didn't have specific dates that if we could have an approximate month of the year, starting with Theresienstadt, which was August 10th.

Well, that was August 10 is right. No, it's not actually. Because August 10 I had to go into the assembly place and we stayed there overnight and we probably left there on the 11th on the 12th. And so I stayed in Theresienstadt I guess until roughly late spring or something '43.

Might be April or May?

I don't know.

But it was late spring.

Yeah, well I don't think it was hot enough for being summer because I would have remembered that. Yeah. And then Auschwitz until spring, early spring '44 something. Yeah, early spring '44, if not earlier.

And then you said--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

That's right. And then January '45, shipped out end of December, beginning of January with death march.

And how long would that take?

Well, it just took 10 days for what I-- 10 days and then about another 10 days in the open boxcar. And I must have come either at the end of January, beginning of February to Dachau. Actually, I have the exact date because I've got the exact date in my column. It's in there. I think it was February. And I found, because I went to Dachau when I was doing the documentary with the Hitler thing which we did, and then I got the official Dachau document of all the signers and I found myself there when I came and what happened then.

Should we save it for the next time?

No, go ahead.

You've talked about some of the material or physical reasons that you've survived such as finding the knapsack, such as having certain people help you, the fact that you spoke several languages, and a number of things.

No, several languages was totally unimportant. The fact that I spoke German.

OK, so it's more specific. Do you remember?

Why? Because I just know that there was no accent. It was just Prague German is one of the most pure German

But don't you think speaking other languages--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

In terms of that I had something with the Czech and all that. But I mean we happened to be Czech and then I spoke obviously. But I don't know whether that was-- I don't think so. German was certainly the most important language at that particular situation.

Besides that, and you and I have talked about this, what helped you survive? What kept you going?

Well, I thought I talked about it all the time. You have to be more specific? Well, I mean it's just like I said very specifically alert, to be alert. Physically in a relatively condition to be young. And have a certain measure of intelligence to adjust to novel conditions, which is the definition of intelligence. And the ability to adjust to novel conditions, the definition of intelligence. And then you have a measure of luck. And then the connections you make, support system which you have, and that is decisive. And to what extent you retain your health.

And then also you have to have some sort of meaning and find meaning in that and somehow find meaning in the suffering. Or why. Find meaning. And that you only can do if you have some sort of belief system or some sort of philosophy of life which will enable you to explain and make some sort of unreasonable, chaotic, dreadful stuff relate to it and give it some meaning. So that you can say, well, there's a meaning which makes it possible for me to endure because of some cause or other reasons which I can use in order to make sense of it.

So what about your philosophy?

Well, that's what I'm saying. That's precisely the things, yeah, that I think it was very helpful for me to have been brought up in this particular situation, with this type of philosophy my parents had. And I think that, in that particular situation, was exceedingly helpful. Can you speak about exactly what you believe?

Well it's just a question of-- The notion of karma, for example, is very important in terms of that some of the things which you have done in previous lives which will come and you will have to atone for it in order to make some reparations, restitution for that. So that certain things you have done to other people will somehow come back at some sort of future life. And that, of course, is a very persuasive thing in situations like that to say, hey you know I mean, God, what did I do in order to have this sort of fate?

And so that may be very specific and also in terms of what we have to go through in order to evolve. What is the suffering which may make you into a better person, a purification process, so to speak. And that's very concrete and that gives you some sort of meaning with which it just helps you to cope and Yes I have that and certainly used it made myself, availed myself of that. And I read in some books which I was able to-- Steiner books which I was able to get in to Auschwitz-Birkenau because of my friend Hans Fischer-- and so I read these things.

And I actually also had, by the way, the Bible there too, which I've read.

Old and New Testaments?

Yeah. Yeah. And so that was very helpful. I found it. And well that's it.

Now you also talked to me about have been allowed [INAUDIBLE] and also talk quickly about feeling that the loving, strong relationships that you had in your childhood, in your family gave you a certain strength and a certain faith in humanity or faith in family and goodness, maybe goodness or maybe some other words that would be of your own choosing that gave you strength in that situation. Can you talk about that?

Well, I think that I wouldn't say faith in goodness, but also the fact that there was a great deal of love in this world which I experienced which gave me a lot of-- For example, if I go into some place where I have to be under dreadful pressure and I go there starved and obviously I won't have any sort of protective coat, so to speak. And this sort of love and this sort of affection and positive experience I've had, it's something which still somehow nourishes me now in a way. Because I've not with much of that left because of circumstances.

And they made quite a bit of a difference, yes, because I think they gave me the resources which I otherwise would have not had. And that I think is a very important point. Yeah. Because the love I've experienced is sort of, yeah, well love more or less what this four-letter word really stands for.

Caring.

Well, it's just more than care. It's not strong enough. It's just the type of affection and nurture which I received made all the difference. Nurture which gave me this sort of strength. Because some people were physically much stronger than I am, much more athletic, muscle big things and all that, all perished. And they said, how come? You were one of the weakest we've had, thinnest, most X-ray type looking. And we are finished and that happened to the death march. I remember that. And so how come you still in this sort of shape? We are the big fellow, strong and all that. And they didn't make it. So it wasn't physical, was it?

And you know the fact that I'm still relatively sane is simply that, because I haven't had much nature ever since because many people died and all that. People who have been-- And I wasn't blessed with-- moved from one place to another, wasn't blessed with this sort of nurturing environment. And I'm still-- it's kind of wearing thin, but you know--

You had kind of a special family. And you were living in kind of a special time Do you think that that was a kind of

accumulation of culture and education and an interesting mix of Jewish and Christian secular influences going on during that time that you enjoyed and thrived on. Do you feel that in a sense at the time that we can go back to that. It was a very special time that cannot be replaced.

Well, times have changed. People have changed. We have different generations with different experiences. And I haven't seen it very much. Yes, in certain circles you still have this sort of very substantive, civilized, cultured interaction. But I find it that it gets rarer by the minute. Also humanity. I think humanity is not something which is found very readily in our days. More rare than it existed before. At least that's my impression.

Also, I'm no longer in the circle of people. Some have died out and there's no one, not many people are left to perpetuate it. And I still say, coming back to what I said earlier, and some recognition, which is relatively of recent time, is the fact that the elites did not survive. And I know if my cousin, for example, wouldn't be around, and in my aunt has, and she made the difference. She has survived, my aunt, because she stayed Theresienstadt because she was employed in a war industry which she developed some expertise and they didn't ship her to some death camp.

So I know what sort of difference she did for me, although I saw her very infrequently, only once a year. And she was in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, and all that would visit her. And it made a difference in the world. But less and less people are available or are brought up who would have these sort of qualities. I just don't see them. They died out. And most of them died anyway, because I said, most of them died in the camps. They didn't make it.

So we have a totally different input. And what I've seen here in the United States and all that. 50s were still around some people who went through World War II somehow and had a different upbringing and a little bit. What I see now in the United States and the present generation, it's a catastrophe. I just have absolutely not great expectations of what these people will contribute in terms of this type of atmosphere, which would be substantive.

Or how we would survive difficulties.

That's right. Well, that's right. That's right. That's right. That's right. In terms of how people will respond to stress situations, how easy it will be, relatively easy before they sell out. In other words, they're not going to be able to-- Well, we've seen that in Vietnam. We've seen that in Korea to some extent. And now, before people actually cave it doesn't take much. How much stress can they take? And it doesn't take much before they actually sell out one way or another or break. I don't know that's what you wanted me to say.

It didn't want you to say something specific, but yeah, that's fine because I'm working on these ideas. I think maybe we should wait till the next time. Each of these questions is fairly complex. I'll give you a list of the various subjects that I presume we'll spend on.

Yeah but I mean that's all because we still have--

[INAUDIBLE].

Well, just go-- Yeah, keep on going a little bit so that we just get that behind ourselves.

I think it's important. I wanted to ask, out of all your experiences in the camps, you probably named a lot of the worst things because they stand out in your mind, the worst examples, the most horrifying events, the ones that caused you to lose your faith in humanity or whatever, if you have. I don't know. What would you say was the worst thing?

Well, that I can point out very easily was the experiences in the open boxcar. I just don't hesitate only to hesitate for a moment.

Do you want to talk about it?

I thought we talked about it.

Not on the tape.

The details of that would be good.

Because it's intense.

Since we are going to start with a death march and then move on to the boxcar, maybe we could wait till then.

It's all leading into other things.

In fact, it's 6:00 now. We want it to feel relaxed and go on. Which I like the fact that one thing suggests another as we moved along.

You don't have anything else which is not that involved?

All my questions are involved.

Oh, just doesn't lead one thing to another.

There's the whole area of the death march and the boxcar.

That's going to be covered, but is there anything else?

Well, I know what she means. I think some of the philosophical questions--

A lot of my questions have to do with the meaning of your experience and the implications for a time and this sort of thing. And implications in terms of what you chose to do with your life from having experienced that, so they're not easy to answer. And especially since we haven't also covered some of the chronology to refer back to.

It's just very simply it's just not a situational accident that I became a sociologist after I failed to continue my medical studies, or was unable to finish them is more correct. Because that's what I wanted to do, and I still feel that I would have probably been successful in that type of profession. But that was not possible because I had to leave for Australia. I couldn't do that. And I came to the United States and it was still not impossible, but I was getting a bit old for that just to start from scratch.

And so the next obvious thing is to understand. And I'm still working on trying to understand what is to be understood, what can be understood, as much as they can be understood or something which is known as the Holocaust. And so that's why I felt sociology would be the appropriate thing. Certainly psychology is helpful, and I've studied that also, but I think sociology, or social psychology more specifically, is probably the proper discipline to understand what can be understood, at least as much as one can.

Did you sense from the beginning that you're working on the Holocaust? Or did you turn away from that for awhile and go in another direction?

Well yeah, because I was still looking for my nation. I was doing a number of different things which had nothing to do with the Holocaust. And I don't particularly think it's very healthy to dwell on that subject for any length of time, no question about that. I do that not because I want to be in it, because I feel a certain obligation towards those who have died to somehow leave some sort of traces or kind of a legacy in places, if you will, of what I was able to gather. And that's very difficult because most people don't give a hoot. And they're not dreadfully interested in that.

Although because they think it's something which happened in the past, not understanding that the material lends itself or analysis of the human status and humanity itself, and if you don't understand that, the chances are that we are not going to learn anything from it and that, to me, is unbelievable in view of the millions who were to die because of ignorance and destructiveness, human destructiveness, which is I think primarily based on ignorance rather than evil.

And out of that I'm doing what I do. It's not that I enjoy it at all. I don't enjoy it. I don't enjoy every minute of it. It's a sacrifice on my part because-- And it certainly has done something to my marriage too. And human relationships with everyone, it's still in the Holocaust. It's still in the Holocaust, and you know it's still tainted with all the corpses. It smells. You can smell the corpses and when he's around. So who needs you?

And I think that has very much to do. people? Are not particularly attractive. Not a very attractive sort of thing to deal with and be associated with it for the person who is doing that. So I consider it to be a sacrifice on my part that I do what I do. On top of the fact that I'm getting very little recognition for it except the rejection, more rejection than acceptance. It's a very thankless job to do.

Sounds like a terrible legacy.

Not terrible, but I do it simply out of obligation of those people whom I consider more useful and more worthy of living than the people who have survived. But I feel that's what is expected of me by those who have died. And that's what they would expect of me. And I know them and I know how they think and all that. So I'm doing it, but it just doesn't come easy. And I don't enjoy it. And I certainly don't enjoy it and I I'm not getting any recognition out of it to speak of. Certainly not rewarding. And I'm doing it. And maybe I should and maybe help you get out of it. Because how long can you do it before you say enough is enough?

Well, I certainly thank you for just coming here also all the other lectures that you do at school and of course you give. You're right. Most people probably don't care, but there's a tiny group, maybe relatively tiny, a small and tenacious group.

Well, we just talk to some people I'm forced and compelled to work with, how they view that.

We'll talk about that another time, the various motivations--

And why people work on that and feel just totally lacking in humanity or human compassion and all that. And they are into it for reasons which I don't even know. And to work with them, it's just-- it's virtually almost masochistic. OK? Is that it? No? That's a problem and a threat. More a threat than a promise. OK. All right. Do you have anything else other than your kind last words to say which I appreciate, which I appreciate.

What else I have is that, again, I think this is a very high-quality interview.

You know the thing is I really don't have any comparison. Because most of the fellow survivors I know haven't told me anything very much other than the very descriptive stuff which has been repeated time and time again, and inside very little.

Well that's what I'm talking about. I think it's the combination of the two that I think has been going all along throughout the interview, the combination of the so-called facts and the physical world, your perception of the facts and you're thinking about them. I don't think there's anything more that we could conceivably gain but that combination.

Well, that's why we hope we do something, you do something, which not only has merit but can be useful. Now my final question would be a question to you. To what extent can you come out with some sort of excerpts of the various interviews, which I'm sure you have had in mind, and come up with a very massive, concentrated and substantive documentary on that particular part based on the type of interviews you've had? And that I'd like to see. Because we could use it. We could use it. And I think the public would use it.

And the interesting thing, which is on a more happy note, it's I've been shamed almost by the response I get from some students in terms of they come and take me aside and say, we'd like to thank you. The insight and changed our lives and all that. And that is something which is a positive note to conclude this sort of discussion. Because apparently there's a great deal of receptiveness in young people. And it can make a difference. It can make a difference in their lives.



So if we can come up with something which is really quality and permits them to develop insights which otherwise or elsewhere could not be obtained, then I think we've done something which might make a difference to our lives by saying, hey, we haven't done that in vain. And something really positive is coming out of it. So that's what I have to say.

In know what you're saying. I think the majority part of your question needs to be discussed John [? Avlon. ?] I don't know what you have to say about [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah, I have some thoughts on that. May I turn the camera off?

Yeah, sure.