

Yeah? All right.

OK. The dates that you were in Auschwitz-- May 1944 to January 1945?

In Auschwitz, Birkenau, yes.

OK. I just want to check that I have my years right.

Sorry, what did you say?

May 1944.

May '44, yeah, to what?

To January.

18th, yeah.

OK. And I did a little bit of reading before today. And there were a couple of incidents that I read about. And I was wondering if--

OK. Go ahead

--this meant anything to you. One item said that October 6 to 7 in 1944, 135 Greek Jews, former officers in the Greek Army, participated in a revolt that broke out.

Yeah.

The Greek survivors, they claimed responsibility for blowing up Crematoria 3.

Well, first of all, let me tell you this, all of the five officer, Greek officer did not exist. There was only one officer, who did not partake into that. And the officer was mentioning before, who died in my coat-- my cot. That's the only Greek officer, Jewish Greek officer in the Greek Army that we had. There was nobody there was a Greek officer.

Now, the way that I learned what happened at Crematorium 4, where these people were dead, is that they put them in the line of fire, 400 people-- among them, not only Greeks or Greeks and Polish, but they were shot in the head, one after the other, 400 people.

Now, if that is with the smoke we saw, it does not jive with what I knew what happened. I was told by somebody there that the Hungarian guy put fire into a mattress. These other 35 officers, I don't know what they are, who they are. So I don't believe that this information is accurate.

Now, it may be that these 135 Greeks tried to revolt at that moment, where they saw the mattress or the smoke coming up. I don't know. I cannot tell you they did. But I know that many people who died there were killed or lying on the floor, naked, face-down. Now, where did you read the Greek officers about it? Can you tell me or not?

Yeah. This was in the Encyclopedia of the Holocaust. It was a four-volume, four two-inch thick volumes that I found in the library.

Do you know who the author is? No.

No.

It's OK. It's all right. I'll find it.

I could find out. Yeah, when you find out, I would appreciate you tell me about that.

OK. As I say, I can't say without reservation that there were no Greek officers. If they did revolt, I don't know about it. I never knew about it, except, as I told you, what happened.

OK. Well, I have another thing here--

Do you have?

--from the same source.

Yeah, OK.

Maybe that's wrong, too.

No, I don't know.

They said, one Greek group of 400 selected in the summer of 1944 to expedite the destruction of Hungarian Jews refused, knowing the punishment was death.

Refused what?

Refused to do what they were being told. They refused to help in the destruction of the Hungarian Jews.

I don't think so.

OK. And another one was--

You see, in October, all the Hungarian Jews had gone through the crematoria. There wasn't any more Hungarian Jews. Half a million people were cremated. Or some people went to camp to work. But most of them were killed. So I don't remember anybody refusing to work. I don't know.

Let's see. I'll try one more. Summer of 1944, Albert Herrera--

Oh, yes. Yes, that's true. I mean, oh, tell me what he says first. Yes.

--of Larissa.

Larissa, yeah.

How do you say it?

Larissa.

Larissa.

L-A-R-I-S-S-A.

Part of an ash-emptying detail--

Right.

--wounded his guards and escaped across Vistula.

True, Vistula.

Vistula. And he was recaptured and tortured to death.

Pretty close. Well, I'll tell you what happened. This Albert Herrera, he used to work at the crematorium number two, where I was. And they went to work and would take people to go and empty the ashes from the crematorium, from the ovens. They'd take the ashes and go and empty it in the river.

So he took, Albert and two other people, three people, and two guards went there to do that. Now, Albert Herrera took one of those shovels and hit the German, one of the Germans and the other one. And then he ran into the water and start swimming.

Well, one of the two Germans got up earlier, whatever it was, and he shot him. They caught him. The other two didn't do anything. They were stunned. The fact is that they brought him back. They cut his head like this, all around his crane. His bones, they were cut and open.

And they put in front of our crematorium, in front of the ovens, for us to go around and see as an example of what will happen to us if we try again. That's the story of Albert Herrera. So that's true. I saw it myself. So I could guarantee.

Anything else we should talk about on Auschwitz before we move on?

I think I told more or less what I know. But maybe there are many things that I don't recall now today, but mentioned. That's basically the story of it.

OK. So you'll have to forgive me if I'm asking you questions that you've already--

Don't worry about it.

--answered. I'm not completely following the sequence of events. So in January 1945, you left Auschwitz.

Right.

And then you went?

To Mauthausen.

OK.

M-A-U-T-H-A-U-S-E-N.

And that was? And how did you?

That was the made camp. And that, from Mauthausen, to Ebensee after four or five days, I think we were there.

In Mauthausen?

Mauthausen, yes.

And what happened in that four-- do you remember what happened in the four or five days?

Yes, a horrible stay in Mauthausen, because as I said, where we stay, was no room to sleep. We were sitting down to sleep. And when they would go through the Appell, which was the roll call, would be outside with only a shirt. It wasn't

wear anything-- a shirt outside for three hours for the Appell to finish. It was horrible, very, very bad in Mauthausen, but still, only four or five days.

Then I went to Ebensee and had a lot of work there too. This was different, kind of. It was exhausting. In the morning, at 5 o'clock, we had to get up and start washing outside. Outside, everything was snowed. And the snow, double the sleeves, were that thick. It was horrible. But that, everything was horrible, of course.

How did you get from-- how did you get to Ebensee?

To Ebensee?

Yeah.

I don't know. I don't remember. I was asked recently this question. I tried to remember. I don't remember whether it trucks. I think it was with trucks, but I'm not sure if I walked or not. I think it was trucks. Certain things in your memory-- in my memory, I should say-- vanished or changed a little bit. There are some events which I will never forget.

There are other things I don't remember, like for instance, I remember the event with the trains and the Czechs sending us food. And I remember, suddenly, in that train with the open boxcars.

Then what happened next? Where did we stop? I know we went to Mauthausen, but before that, we must have stopped somewhere. Because we walked to Mauthausen. I don't remember that. Blank.

I remember coming into the Mauthausen camp. And we didn't see the camp until-- because it was on a plateau. And we were walking in the snow at night. It was about 6:00 or 7 o'clock at night, dark. And then suddenly, we saw the plateau all illuminated which was the Mauthausen camp. That was-- they started hitting us.

But maybe things are gray in our-- in my head, at least, many things. Like I told you, two things that I would be working in the quarantine, like coming out and waking up according to the-- to move one of the post guards-- what do you call it, those guards where the people stay down with the guard and wait for you? Anyway, to move positions.

One day, we went to clean up the mud some boards. I don't remember. But now, that's only two events. And it was in a month. And during that month, we worked every night something, if not once, at least twice.

But I don't remember anything else. That's what I remember now. Things that impressed you, probably, that's what it is. How I should answer you when I cannot tell you the sequence, things like that?

And so then you were at Ebensee for that three-month period?

From February-- well, beginning of February-- February, March, April, and May. No, April, not going to May. That way, I made eight. And during that period of four months in Ebensee, it was twice in hospital.

And how did that happen?

How? Because I had-- when we left Auschwitz, everybody was trying to have the best shoes possible. And I got, I thought, a good pair of shoes. I wore the shoes. And I developed some wounds in my shoe. And there, it was a shoe.

And then that wound closed. And all the pus went inside of the leg. And my leg, this leg-- and they both were like that thick. And it was very painful.

So when I was working at [INAUDIBLE] in Ebensee, I fell down. And when I fell, my pants went down. And the German meister was called-- we used to call-- saw that. So they said, you go right away to the hospital. So I went to the hospital to operate on me.

They took lots of pus out of it. And then after a week, they sent me back to work. And then after a week, came back again. This was swollen again. And after that week or two-- I don't remember, two weeks-- the Americans arrived.

And that's it. I was saved. I didn't know I was saved. The night that the Americans arrived, let's see, yes, I thought I was done, finished. I felt Muselmann feelings, you know?

The?

Muselmann, I told you before. Muselmann was that.

Right.

That, I felt there that if they would give me food, I wouldn't eat it. But then I recovered the next day, because they took us-- the Americans took us, the worst cases, and they put us in tents. And each one with tremendous care was there, very much so. They did a very good job.

Can you tell me about that time?

Yeah. That was after the liberation. We were in the forest. And they came with bulldozers. They cleaned up that surface to the top of pile. And they established big tents, huge tents, which were Red Cross tents. And they put the most serious cases of [INAUDIBLE] to die there.

And we had lots of them. We had many nurses who would come and feed us every 10 minutes with a little bit of soup, a little bit of rice, very little, several times. And that, I think, which was save me. Because I was feeling that I would die. There is a feeling where you don't want to eat anymore. You shut off. That's it. And we survived.

But again, when I came to Greece, as I said, I was very, very thin too. And for three months, I would go to a restaurant, eat with this friend of mine. We would eat lunch.

And after I finish lunch, I would take the bread and put it in my pocket. Said, what are you doing? Well, I don't lose anything. I will keep the bread. I was keeping the bread for three months before I got used not to take the bread there. That what security means, self-preservation.

Do you remember any of the people in the hospital who were taking care of you?

Community takes care of you in the hospital.

Well, after you had been liberated?

Oh, I got in the barrack. I remembered a fellow, one of the doctors and one nurse, too, who was very, very kind, very nice. But I don't remember anymore the names, really. No, I don't remember.

And overall, all the people there were excellent in that hospital, in that tent. Of course, it was also an immediate comparison between where we were and where you went. So there wasn't much there who was going to win from the point of view of excellence. But I don't remember, no.

How did you decide to go? How did you decide what to do when you were ready to leave the hospital?

I didn't. I wanted to go back to Greece, see who is left. So I go there. And there were many people gone. And then I want to find out things that we had, my family. I found certain things, which I sold fast. And I spent it at night with friends.

Then finally, it seemed the time that I didn't have any more money. I had to start working. So I worked for a

pharmaceutical company for a while as a secretary. And then I was offered a job at the Israeli Consulate in Athens, which I took.

And that's where I finished when I came to the United States. I worked there for a while. And then I decided to go to the United States as an immigrant.

I came here. I worked at Montgomery Ward as a porter. And then I decided to go to college. So I went to Berkeley. And I was out very much by the first at Montgomery Ward. They would give me a job.

I would finish, let's say, at 1 o'clock, working Monday or Tuesday. I would take the car and go to Montgomery Ward, punch my card, and work. Any time I want, I could work. So it was a big help for me. My wife used to work for Blue Cross. So we made it in a way.

It was not difficult, let's put it this way. It was difficult at the beginning for me in Berkeley, I mean, the first time that we had the first experiment, the guy comes and says, we're already late. I said, what? How come? We just started earlier in the year. We're late.

Then I have to give you a list of instruments that you have in your cupboard. And you start counting for one test tube. I didn't know what test tube means. I had to translate in the dictionary.

By the time the experiment was due, I had not checked my cabinet for half of the things I had there. So I went, I asked them, what can I do? Said, don't worry about it.

The next day comes, and yes, a zero. What do you mean? Why is that zero? For experiment done. Well, you didn't have an experiment. I told you about it, but it doesn't matter. I understand what you said, but you still have the zero. So you had to work hard. But I worked hard and it was no problem there after that.

And let's see, then you graduated.

Berkeley, yeah.

Berkeley. And then what did you do?

Then we were interviewed while we were graduating, that last month, by different companies who wanted employees. And I didn't want to go to my PhD. I wanted to work, start working. I was already 30-some, that is all.

So I was interviewed by a company who used to make some pigments and dyes, products and dyes in Richmond-- in Oakland. And then I was hired by them as a chemist. I was hired there. And then I worked for the company for 23 years.

It was bought by Hercules further and then Ciba-Geigy. And after that, they had the occasion to go in my own business too, import frames from France. I wanted change, just to see what happened. But I worked for 10 years in that. And then I decided the time to retire has come. And I retired. And that's it.

When did you meet your wife?

In Athens after the war, in 1946.

And then?

And then she was studying in Milwaukee. And she was coming in summer back for vacation, which she was encouraging me to come back here, which I didn't want to. But then I decided to go. So I came here.

And when I first came here, I said, my god, how I made a big mistake. Were people running here, what's the matter? Are they crazy? You don't believe. You don't understand the Americans. In Europe, we think that we are the only smart

people in the world.

Then you come here, after a while, you realize how much smarter the Americans are. But at the beginning, you don't. So I was very unhappy for a year or so. And then it started changing, I realized. And now, I go on a trip only for days. I won't stay there forever.

I'm sorry?

And now, I go on the trips to visit the place. But I would not stay there more than a month. You can't live anymore there after you live in the United States. Nothing beats it. Well, at the beginning, it's entirely different. So that's that.

What was the transition like from being in the concentration camps and then being--

In Athens again?

Yeah.

Well, there was such a big at the-- it's very difficult to describe. At that time, people would ask you what happened. And you say what happened. And sometimes, you would discern some doubts, because what you're saying sounds so peculiar things and so difficult to comprehend.

For instance, the first guy who came to Salonika from the camp, the name was Battis. He came to Salonika. And he described the conditions in the concentration camp and what happened. So he was locked in a state hospital for two weeks.

But then other people came and substantiated his story. So they took him out. And they gave a party in honor. So they couldn't believe what's going on. But well, if I understand your question, is what was the big reaction from prison to freedom? Is that it? Well, it was strong, of course, very strong.

And as I said, there was remnants, like the bread. I could not leave the restaurant without taking the bread, even though I was satisfied with what I ate, the idea of insecurity. I could not run at the beginning, because my muscles were not used to it. I had to take the strict kind of practice.

But then you did really recover. Then you tell the story to somebody, somebody would say, oh, my god. What a horrible thing. Well, you know, when he says like that, he didn't get much of the point. When you don't hear any comment, and you see the guy pensive, then you know that it's sinking in him, you see.

But the reaction was very big, very strong. You could see civilization. We saw one civilization, that's another event that happened, when we were coming, walking from Poland to Czechoslovakia-- or to that area, I don't know-- to the German village that we crossed, with families there-- an old woman, a grandmother, children. You don't see that in the camp.

It was something, a revelation, this is the world that we knew. And this world that we knew start throwing stones at us because we were Jewish. Kill them. Or throw gas and burn them. That's what they were saying while we were walking. So that's where we saw first time civilization and what kind of civilization.

And then you are liberated into a new life that you knew before. But many things were missing, of course. Your family was missing. Everything was changed. Your belongings had disappeared-- somebody stole it. Somebody used it. But still, compared to the camp, anything was marvelous.

I don't exactly know how to phrase this question. I don't know if you can even. Let's see. How do you put all this perspective in your life?

Well, there are several things that happened. In the beginning, I thought human beings are animals. And that given

certain conditions, these feelings come up. They surface up. Then you act like an animal. I was wrong. It's not that. It's worse.

I feel that human beings are worse than animals, because of our ability, as I said before, to devise torture, to inflict pain, to do things that an animal is not capable of doing. And as I said, I searched in my mind to see what, if I were given the task, OK, tell us what do we do to change this world.

I don't know. I have no answer. But I'm sure it is not what you do now, what we are doing now. In other words, I don't believe what is going now in the world, that it has changed anything. Nothing has changed.

I think there is more atrocities now and murders now than it was before, with all our experience of the Holocaust. So something, we are doing something to better the conditions. We are not doing anything yet, in my opinion, again.

I may be very pessimistic, but I don't feel we have achieved anything. And I'm not talking only from the point of view of a Jewish accomplishment. I'm talking in general. Cambodia, Yugoslavia now, and Armenia, and all over the world-- Vietnam, Turkey, Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein.

I don't think that it's-- we have found a trick where the human being now will see the future and say, well, now, we know what to do. We know how to eliminate everything, bad things we've done. And given the conditions, you will do the same thing. We will do something-- maybe a little better, because we learn every time a little better how to be violent.

But that's true. That's the way I feel it. That's why I believe it's good policy to have information like the one we have now of what has happened as a historical event. But I don't think that this will help our cause from the point of view of human beings, the good human beings.

I don't think it will. Because knowledge, and very strongly, I believe in it, of atrocities has never prevented atrocities. What prevent atrocities? I don't know. Maybe the young generation will find something. You.

And we have to be good. All right. How? Look at Elsa, that little girl in Germany who was used to read the small textbook that you don't go to a Jewish doctor, because one said someone went to the Jewish doctor with her mother and said the little girl came from the office of the doctor crying, or bleeding, running down the steps.

So her mother picked her up, and said, let's go, because it's a Jewish doctor. So the moral of the story, at the end, is that when you are sick, you never go to a Jewish doctor.

And you think here, they are teaching five-year-old girl things like that, then what do you get? That's what you get, get the Nazi. And then you say, well, the best thing is not to teach them that.

Of course, that is the best. If you want, you can do that. But somebody else will teach something else to somebody else. And they will come to you, get you. So I don't know the answer. Maybe you are going to fight it. Who knows?

Questions?

I have a couple of philosophical--

OK.

--sort of questions. There's no right or wrong, or wrong, or whatever answer. Living in Greece when you did and experiencing the whole rise of the fascist movement throughout Europe, do you believe there was a way for it to have been stopped? Could Hitler, or Mussolini, or the whole fascist movement have been stopped early on, and this whole thing avoided?

I think that it could have, but I don't know how. I think it could have. Because sometimes, when you think, when you



read about the German uprising with Hitler, you see moments where there were quite a bit of weakness in their part. If the other side had attacked at that moment or taken advantage of that, probably they were suppressed. I think so.

But I don't know how. I don't know what. For instance, Mussolini was even more difficult, because Mussolini did not start with the type of Hitler's theories to get the Italians to follow him. He had big phrases, beautiful phrases, and things like that. It was appealing. It was very appealing.

He wanted to get Ethiopia. And he had beautiful songs about the little Ethiopian will come, and the liberators will come. So it was a different thing. So it was more difficult, in my opinion, to stop Mussolini, because you couldn't see much of an evil with him as you did with Hitler, you could. But this is my feeling. But as I said, I don't know how. Yeah.

OK. Thank you.

I wanted to ask, if you can tell, I understand you have been back to Greece.

Yes.

Have your feelings towards Germany-- have you been back to Germany--

Yes.

--or to Poland?

I've been with my work. When I was a chemist, I used to visit a company in the-- Frankfurt or Stuttgart, I don't remember. And I was, in a way, impressed with the young generation, the young generation Germans, at that time. I'm talking about 20 years ago.

So they were, in a way, more curious to find out what happened. They were not trying to hide things. They wanted to discuss. But the old generation, no. I was feeling very uncomfortable with them. We had a leader. If they were this old generation, like me, I was very tense, because I knew they were SS. There's no question.

But again, as I said, I want to blame Germany. But frankly, I think it can happen anywhere. If you have the proper preparation, if you have a diabolical preparation like Hitler did, slowly, I can change you and me easily.

This is why I'm scared, because I don't know how to prevent that. I don't know what tricks one can use to prevent it, to have very intelligent people all the time. But we don't have very intelligent in all the time. So people are weak.

Some people, they like power. Power, everybody likes. Look who's turning around, surrounding us. So I don't know if there is a solution. And unfortunately, this is the-- I don't have a message. That's the problem. And I feel frustrated. But that's the way I feel.

Can I ask another question?

Sure.

How have your experiences-- and have they shaped something, the way you raised your children, or did they have any effect on what you wanted to tell them?

Well, I've told my children about my past and my experience in camp. Of course, my children were really young when I was telling all that. They were five and six when they-- so at first steps, I had to be careful what I say.

And the education I gave them or the raising was more related to the way I was raised in Salonika. It's more European-style strict type of I was the boss. Would come from work and I'd say, what did Mark do? What did Sybil do?

And they do say, she did that. And now, I do that. And then I was the policeman. I didn't have time to enjoy them, really. Now, I know it's too late. I shouldn't have been that strict. I enjoy them now. But I could have enjoyed them when they were young.

But I did raise them according to the style that I had seen in my family, or surrounded by family, too. So it's the whole European system of discipline. And I don't know if it is the right one.

And as a matter of fact, then we say, which one is the right one, discipline or no discipline? I don't think we know that we have the answers. The Americans say that give them freedom. Say, why? Are you crazy or what? But with our raising, we didn't do much better. Same thing. We don't know.

Can I ask sort of an offshoot of her question? You said that you told your children when they were five and six. Why did you choose that particular time to start talking about your past?

OK. Yeah, I know what you mean. No, I didn't--

Did they bring it up? Or did you decide.

No, no, I didn't just-- no, well, I don't remember now how it happened. But the reason it happened then, probably, is because I was closer then with them because my wife passed away.

So every day, I had to come home and have dinner together. We would discuss math. We would discuss different things, geography, capitalism. And I had to be a real teacher. And we did that. We had a good fall of it.

And then once in a while, I would talk about the concentration camp. And they would ask me, where were you then? And they're only children's questions. You have to answer very carefully. And they, for a while, didn't even appear to be impressed. They didn't know what I was talking about. So I let it go.

Then later, they start asking questions now. And of course, they are grown up. And they are very much concerned with what was going on, what did go. And of course, I told them about it. And they know that the concentration camp, no question about it.

Did you want them to be a certain kind of human beings?

Oh, yeah. I told them what the ideals are, like everybody does. I don't know of any parents that want his children not to be an ideal children. But if you and I cannot be ideal, why do you expect them to be ideal?

I think it's an illusion, surely, that you do something which is good. What are you talking about? Suppose we are communists. Then the children will have to be good communists. You should hate the Americans.

And I remember when Mark was, my son was five, would come and bring games, war games. These are the Russians, these are us. So you may say things, what is the ideal thing, to be good, be nice to people, do things.

If the circumstances around you are nice, allow you to do that, you will. Fine, very good. So we are very good people. We are very nice people. But circumstances won't always be like that. It may change.

And then you will realize that there is another path that you have suppressed. And it's coming up. Sometimes, you are able to stop it. Sometimes you are not. I tried the best you can. You try the best you can with the children. It's the best you can. From there on, if you are right, I don't know, or if I am right.

Is there any stuff that you can think of that I should have asked you about that I haven't?

Good question. No. I don't know. I think we have talked in general the main things that I think about it now. If you have any questions later that you want to ask me, please feel free to give me a call.

OK.

Or anybody here, doesn't matter to me.

I have one last question then.

Go ahead.

If you were to describe yourself or summarize Daniel the man in one sentence, how would you do that?

Daniel the man, equal to many other men.

Very good.

Daniel the man equal to many other men. That's all, I'll tell you that. I am not exceptional. I think I'm the average, more or less.

Thank you.

Welcome. Thank you.