

Going back to Berlin.

Yeah.

Actually, two questions. What did you think about the Berlin Wall going up and then coming down, if anything?

Oh, I thought about it, yes. Going up, I thought it was a very sad thing. But I didn't really feel sorry for them. I figured they've cooked the soup, now they can eat it. I mean, this is a very selfish attitude, but I was really-- I didn't hate anybody. I managed to throw that off.

For a while there, I really hated the Japanese and I did hate the Germans for doing what they did to my grandmother. But I've learned to accept people. Hate really is a very destructive thing.

And I thought, well, I don't want to get sick of this. I don't want to. But I wasn't that sorry. People say, oh the poor Berliners out there. The poor-- yeah, well, I mean, I'm sorry.

So when the wall came down, I figured well, now they're going to find out how wonderful it is when all these people that have been brainwashed come and see them, which is exactly what happened. I mean, we went-- Kitty and I went into East Germany and I can only say those people were like complete strangers compared to the West Berliners. So the clash must have been unbelievable.

These people, they don't-- they didn't think for themselves. They accepted everything. They accepted-- they expected to be fed, and clothed, and housed, and not work.

And the first person I talked to when the wall was just coming down was a taxi driver. We had arrived from wherever it was. The train stopped in East Germany in the middle of the night and Kitty had a fit.

So anyhow, I said, never mind. We'll take a taxi and go to the hotel in West Berlin. So that was East Berlin and it was-- the houses, these big, terrible typical Russian-built houses. And so we found this taxi driver who had never been to West Berlin. And he said, well, he didn't know where to go.

I said, never mind. Just get into West Berlin. So we went to the wall and he was going to go back through, they wouldn't let him.

He said, we have to go through Checkpoint Charlie. I said, well then find Checkpoint Charlie. Let's [? go. ?] Thank God I spoke the language.

So Kitty was sitting in the back and she was shaking and shivering. She said, oh mother, we got to get out of here. It's still very communistic.

So this guy was driving us. We went through Checkpoint Charlie. Five people had to look at our passports. And I said to the man, why five people? What are they doing?

He says, they don't want to lose their jobs. And so they're all busy. And I said to him, well, how do you like that the wall is coming down now? Are you going to have freedom?

And he says, well, I don't know about this freedom. He says, I used to have-- making good money and everything else. And we didn't have to do this or that.

And I said, I'll tell you something. When you're free, you have to pay. You get off your ass and you go to work.

He didn't like it one bit, not one bit. That was the first East German I met. And after that, we went back-- Kitty and I went back into East Germany and watched that wall come down. And some of the border guards out there in West

Berlin, they'd be sitting in West Berlin selling their uniforms, and their hats, and their medals and everything.

Oh, yes. It was unbelievable. But in East Berlin, it was still real East Berlin, and we went to the museum full of lies. I mean, lies and lies. And they had all kinds of stuff there that they stole from the Jews.

And I tell you, there were some things that looked like my grandmother's, really honest to God they did. They did. Well, they stole all her valuables, of course. But some of the stuff, it just made me ill.

And that museum was-- all the Russians-- the Russian museum about what happened and what didn't happen, I mean, lies, lies, and lies. Propaganda.

But the wall, I took a little piece of it home. And as far as I'm concerned, whatever comes out of it, I hope they'll build up a happy-go-lucky place, which I doubt very much being the Germans, the way they are. But I did not feel sorry for them. I'm sorry.

I have a last question. In the last 40 years-- since the war ended, 50 years, was there ever a moment where you just sat and reflected upon--

Yes.

-- your experiences, and--

Yes.

--your father and your grandmother. And what have you thought about, what have you learned?

Well, the only thing you learn is that you have to live your own life and be yourself. If you dwell on-- my grandmother, of course I dwell on it. I dream about it, I think about it, and it's a very unhappy thing that happened. But it's too late. But I don't dwell on misery too much. I mean, I get it out of my system a lot with the art I do, too.

I do sculpture and I do very often-- the last sculpture I made is an alabaster piece and-- I read about the women in Bosnia getting raped, and getting beaten, and getting thrown out by their families and everything, so I made the sculpture. And I got it out of my system, see? This is what I do. And I've done that for several things.

A girlfriend friend of mine died of cancer and it was very upsetting to me. And I was working with clay then, and I had this figure. I made this figure and I couldn't change it. I tried three or four times.

Eventually, I mean, it was a woman that was just-- so I gave it to one of my kids. I said, get it out of my sight. I don't want to look at it. So Tommy has it in Bakersfield. But I do a lot with art as far as getting rid of these kind of sensations, yes.

Have you done any sculpture--

Yes.

--that was influenced by your experiences in World War II?

Well, I don't know. I really couldn't say. I've done a lot of different things.

But most of my sculptures, funnily enough, like when I started doing this when Jonathan was about 18, when I decided it was time for me to do some living. So I cut off my hair, which was very long and went to school. And I took some classes, French class, and this one, and creative writing, and I wrote some poetry which I still have.

And eventually I kind of went into portrait painting and sculpture. And I liked sculpture best of all. But most of the

things I did were kind of amusing things, like funny clowns with one shoe, or somebody bending over doing their wash, that kind of stuff.

The heavy stuff really came once I had time to think and read the paper, and think about where I am with myself. And then things got a little bit more meaty. I still do-- one of my granddaughters said, oh my Christmas tree broke, the one you made with the angel on top.

And I said, well, I'll make you another one. But in clay, I mean, I can make a Christmas tree in two days. I mean-- and it's a nice one, something you can't buy. But of course with stone, you work differently. And you have time to put yourself into it.

So I haven't done anything much this year because my daughter's going through a divorce, which is a very difficult divorce. And she's very unhappy and the only person she can lean on is you know who. And so I've had no peace of mind at all.

But it's nearly finished. It's a little bit over a year now. And I mean, her husband really-- she was married 28 years. He walked out on her on her wedding anniversary.

I mean, it's another story. But she was just absolutely devastated, so she came to me. So I've been dry as far as art is concerned.

So I'm painting a picture now, but I'm using a photograph because it's something from Russia that she wants. So I paint that. But I don't have to be artistic to do that, you just have to know how to move the paint.

But when I work in sculpture, I usually put something of myself and then-- some experience or something. And I've never really done any-- yeah, I've done one Jewish boy. Yeah, I've done-- I did one Jewish boy with curls and stuff. I don't know why I did him. I guess he just came out by himself.

And I did one man and a woman, and she was leaning and he goes like this, stay away from me. So that was part of it, I guess. I never thought about it, but lately I've been doing things that are more, how should I say they're more-- when I read something that bothers me, or something that I want to make something nice, I've done a few nice things. Yeah.

I never know. When I start working, I don't know what comes out. I don't know how come it-- yeah. For Nicky, I made a head, a man's head. I don't know. The man, I don't know who he is, in black stone. Weighs a ton.

I said, you can have it in your house. But he lives up on the hill. He can't carry it. So he's going to have to hire somebody to get it up there.

The kids steal me blind. They take the pictures right off the wall. I mean, wherever I go in any one of their houses, I see myself. I don't need a gravestone.

I told them, bury me in the ocean, whatever. I have my gravestones all over the place. I mean, they have-- their houses are full of my stuff. Yeah.

Is there anything more that you'd like to add, any experiences that have stayed with you and influenced your work?

I don't know. I don't know. I guess you are-- you are what you are, and you accumulate some of your experiences and it changes you, I guess.

Hopefully it made me a little bit wiser and it made me very knowledgeable about people. I can judge people extremely well. Sometimes it is embarrassing, because I have really-- 99% I have been right. I've always had that ability.

[? Ludi's ?] very best friend, I said, it's a snake in the grass. I said, I don't know how you could be friends with him. And he turned out to be an absolutely awful person. I mean, just an awful person.

So when I meet people that I do not like, I don't go up to them and say, I don't like you, but I avoid them. And my husband, as much as he thinks I'm good for nothing, when he really needs my help as far as somebody, like when he was still working he'd say, why don't you go talk to this person? Let me know. Because I can tell.

I don't know why. How can you tell? And I think this is an ability that I-- was probably perfected during the war, and-- it's possible. I don't know.

I don't think much about myself, really. I don't think it's a good idea to do it. I wish you would come and see me sometime. Finish up your tape.

[INAUDIBLE] stop the camera. Shawn?

[? Yup. ?]

We're done.

Oh, you look great.

Well, you can't see yourself, because now you're getting up.

Oh, yeah. I look great. [LAUGHS]

But you look great. I just-- sit down again. Let me see.