

-TITLE-FRED MEIBERGER
-I_DATE-
-SOURCE-SAN FRANCISCO HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-
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-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

00:00:00 Q: When were you born?

A: On the first of January, 1909.

Q: So you watched Naziism grow. Can you talk about that?

00:00:30 Naziism was nothing new in 1933. I don't know where you want me to start.

Q: With your fist memory

A: I just read a book. The Jews were not treated very well for along time.

00:01:00 Some had protective letters, they had to buy of course. One poor fellow had to buy it for two thalers. A thaler used to be three marks.

00:01:30 But it wasn't cheap. They were not allowed to do anything. Not even peddling, but they got away with it. This was from the 16th through the 18th century.

00:02:00 Q: Do you remember anti-Semitism?

A: Yes, there was always anti-Semitism in Germany. But it was not the same kind Hitler -that was government sponsored. The other was by the people.

00:02:30 Q: How was it different?

A: I'll give you an example. I left Germany in 1937. I talked to people who asked why I didn't complain to the government.

00:03:00 That was a fine how-dee-doody. There was such a misconception that people had about the going on there. I had three brothers. One is dead now.

- 00:03:30 I was the oldest. I have one who's living in Berkeley - he's ten years younger. We all left Germany.
- 00:04:00 My medium brother worked in an export company, and they had dealings with Japan. They were not as efficient as they are now; things always went wrong. He talked his boss into
- 00:04:30 letting him go over to straighten things out. It was already possible to tell how things were going. So he left in March, 1936. He started his own firm and did very well. Before he left, asked him to see if he could get me there to help him.
- 00:05:00 He did, and in 1937, I left for Japan, via the United States.
- Q: So you spent the war in Japan?
- A: No. I got out in the middle of '41.
- But my youngest brother, who is here, was in transit in Japan
- 00:05:30 And we had to get my parents out, which was not easy. But through contacts in the export business, we had contacts in the government and we finally were able to get my parents out.
- 00:06:00 It was not easy. And those folks, my parents as well as my brother, they were in Japan during the war.
- 00:06:30 The oldest brother was not in Japan during the war. As a matter of fact he was in the American army. I got out of Japan on the last boat.
- 00:07:00 When the Atlantic was closed for emigration, fleeing Jews came to Japan on transit visas to North America, South America, or wherever.
- 00:07:30 They usually arrived and their visa had expired; or the boat left before they got there. Or the money hadn't arrived there yet.
- 00:08:00 There were only a handful of German Jews who could help these guys, and the Meibergers were two of them. So we have a little volume here written by Japanese who worked for the NYD, the shipping company of Japan
- 00:08:30 So he tells a little about the, Meibergers and other things. We formed the Jewish Committee in Japan. Yokohama. There was another one in Kobi, because there were more Jews there.

00:09:00 This was going on for a little while there, until it finally stopped. There were so many Jews coming through Japan and their visas expired.

00:09:30 So an American consulate was established, and I was liaison, so that gave me an --- in there.

Q: Where were you born in Germany?

A: It was a city then called Geistermuller (ph)
It was a Prussian city that was in opposition to Bremerhaven

00:10:00 Bremerhaven WAS the center, with Geistermuller in the south and L---to the north. Now its all called Bremerhaven.

00:10:30 Right now, it is about 150,000. Now, it is about 100,00. My father was a dealer in Leathern and so was I. I learned the business, but out of town.

00:11:00 Q: How did you first experience anti-Semitism?

A: You might say it starts in school. This was not government originated. We always had the old anti-Semitism, which existed centuries before.

00:11:30 Things got better about 1650. (interruption).
Repeat from 00:08:00

00:12:00 It so happened that my brother was in the export business there and I worked for him. He had a small office because he was a representative, and did not have a warehouse.

00:12:30 My brother saw to it that things were done properly, for the exporters. One day, a Jewish fellow by the name of Steinberg, who lived in Tokyo, which was about 30 minutes away

00:13:00 He said that he had sent his name to Berlin as someone who would be able to help guys who came through. All you have to do is call me and I will be here in an hour. We didn't object.

00:13:30 A little later, my brother was on a trip to Osaka he got a call from someone at the shipping company, and a man SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, he had a house full of people who spoke only German, and that he had better come down.

00:14:00 So I locked the place, went to the NYK, and did what I could. And that was the beginning. I left in the middle of '41 and the war started at the end of '41.

00:14:30 There must have been 4 to 5,000 transit passengers that we had to take care of.

Q: What did you do for money?

A: We had another Tokyo gentleman by the name of Barewaltz (ph) and it happened that he had a brother who was the head of the Joint Distribution Committee.

00:15:00 I think Mr. Barewaltz advanced money and was reimbursed by his brother's outfit.

Q: We were talking about how hard it was for people who knew they had to leave, because there was no other country that would take them. How did you feel about that?

00:15:30 How would it make you feel if you had to go? At first, the Nazis pushed them out. But this changed. For example, myself - and I started well before I exited.

00:16:00 My brother sent for me. I went to Cunard and they said they would sell me a ticket if I could prove that I could land in Japan. Go to the Japanese consulate and get something showing you can land. So we go to the Japanese Consulate.

00:16:30 They said all I needed was a valid German passport, which I had. I went back to Cunard, and they said, no, you have to bring something in writing.

00:17:00 I wrote the Japanese Consulate and asked for a response, but they didn't fall for that. It happened that a friend knew someone at Cunard, and through him I got the ticket.

00:17:30 So I took off on the Queen Mary, went across land to Seattle, and sailed for Japan. I was very interested to see the country.

00:18:00 At home, we were a port, also I heard enough about America but I had never seen it. I had a friend, who had a girl friend, but she went via Suez.

00:18:30 The other route would have been via Siberia, but I was interested in America. I didn't know what I was going into - in those days Japan was pretty far off the map.

00:19:00 I didn't know Japanese and I didn't know what would happen. Otherwise I might have been married before I left.

Q: Can you tell me when you first experienced anti-Semitism?

00:19:30 A: In school, there were fights, over "dirty Jew" or something like that. I was 15 when I became an apprentice in a university town.

00:20:00 I remember there was an increase in anti-Semitism, so we learned boxing. We carried canes in case we were attacked, and this was going on. But anti-Semitism was

00:20:30 there all along. Yes, that was about 1924.
Hitler was around already in those days.

00:21:00 I left their in 1927, and in those days we already
tried self-defense. We were never attacked.

Q: How did you notice the growth of anti-Semitism begin?

00:21:30 It became more acute when I lived in Berlin. There were always fights between the Nazis and the Communists. That was around 1931. There were always fights. I see it in front of my eyes now.

00:22:00 The Communists had a hang-out and it would spill over
and the police would attack them. There were shootings
in Alexanderplatz, from which I ran away.

00:22:30 There were other commotions : in the southeast of Berlin.
The Communists and Nazis didn't get along, and there
were demonstrations and they usually ended up in
shootings.

00:23:00 The Nazis grew stronger and stronger, and by 1933, Hitler came into power.

Q: Where were you when you heard that Hitler had been made chancellor?

00:23:30 A: I don't know now, but I was in Berlin. Yes, we saw that as ominous. After all, Hitler wrote Mein Kampf long before that.

00:24:00 A lot of this was clear. He made good on his book, unfortunately.

Q: Where were you between 1927 and '31?

A: I was in G until 1929

Q: Did you experience much anti-Semitism there?

00:24:30 I kept pretty much to myself. I didn't belong to a club. I worked for a Jewish company. I wasn't too much touched by anti-Semitism.

00:25:00 Bavaria was where Hitler started. I spent some time in Hamburg, then I was back in my home town again.

00:25:30 But the first of January, 1931, I started in Berlin.

Q: Did you hear about the concentration camps for political prisoners.

A : Oh yes, we knew about that.

00:26:00 There are people who claim they didn't know. We also knew that things were not the best there. I had an uncle who was arrested and went to Dachau.

00:26:30 When they could prove that they could emigrate they were let out. He was one of them and he went to England. Later, he wouldn't talk about it, they made him so scared. I have a cousin here

00:27:00 He was in stat. He will not touch the subject. You must not mention it. He goes up in the air.

00:27:30 Q: Did most of your extended family get out of Germany?

A: My immediate family, we were able to get out. My brothers went to Japan first. My wifes' mother was deported and never seen again. We had relatives.

00:28:00 We fled to Italy first. Then to Holland. My aunt and uncle did not survive; their son did.

00:28:30 He was hidden, and now he is a professor in Portland,OR. Others, people we knew well, landed in Auschwitz.

00:29:00 Q: When they had the night of the long knives, do you remember that?

A: The Nazis had a beautiful song, "If Jewish blood pours off the knives, then everything is good."

00:29:30 This was going on from 1933. The night of the long knives, I don't know if it ever took place. It took place throughout. But I think this is more a saying.

00:30:00 But it was going on all the time, not only with knives, but with clubs and fists.

Q: The anti-Jewish legislation began right away didn't it?

A: o yes.

00:30:30 Every time, they tightened the screw a little more. First, Jews couldn't work for the government; lawyers couldn't work for the government or for non-Jews.

00:31:00 Jewish doctors were not permitted to treat Gentiles - I don't remember exactly. It was tightened all the time. The park benches had inscriptions, "Jews not allowed."

00:31:30 In the end, they couldn't ride the street cars. They took away the car licenses. You knew you were in danger.

00:32:00 I was dealing in leather, with my father, and I was dealing with shoemakers. I was well-liked. I once

00:32:30 was visiting a shoemaker just after a German battleship had bombed a Spanish city- this was during the Civil War - there was a big to do. I was visiting the shoe maker and in comes his son.

00:33:00 He said the Jews caused this. His father asked him if he knew any Jews. O, yes, he said, they have curly hair and big noses.

00:33:30 His father said, oh yes - he was no anti-Jewish. He said, do you see mr. Meiberger in here, he's Jewish. The son said, no, but you see, they made out caricatures.

00:34:00 So he didn't believe that I was a Jew.

Q: As the political climate changed, did people show you any friendship?

00:34:30 Many people wondered why we leave, they hadn't done anything to us. Nobody believed it would happen. It was the opinion of the German Jews, that by the time Hitler came to power.

00:35:00 Others would intervene, or he would not follow up. But it turned out quite different. Demented.

Q: Did you Jewish friends think the same way?

00:35:30 No, you knew it. It was obvious. Maybe we Jews knew it better than the others. People disappeared. But you didn't have to be Jewish, suppose you were a communist, or gay.

- 00:36:00 They went to prison also. If you are a communist, you can change your party. If you were Jewish you couldn't claim to be gentile. Books were kept. Its not like here, where you can disappear.
- 00:37:00 In Germany, if you move from one place to another, report to the police and the landlord has to sign; you are registered. Its not like here, where your are only found if you have a car accident or something.
- 00:37:30 Q: You said it was harder for your parents to get out
- A: Yes, my brother was establishing his business. He saw the need, and I could help him.
- 00:38:00 He could have made it without me, and in meant saving a life and I am grateful.
- Q: How did you get your parents out?
- A: They tried and we tried but did not succeed. Through a business connection, who had a connection with someone in the Japanese government, a wire was sent and they got a ticket for the boat.
- 00:38:30 It took an act of Congress, or two.
- Q: Then you left Japan. Talk a little about that.
- A: I left on the last boat. I was a middle man, or liaison between the committee and
- 00:39:00 I ask the consul one time how long it would take to get a visa. He said maybe twenty, twenty-two years. As the business went on with the consulate, Shortly thereafter the Atlantic was closed and the refugees came across Siberia to Japan.
- 00:39:30 When Russia was attacked by Germany, that escape route was closed, too. The consul said that now we have quotas, so you can go if you want. That was the middle of '41.
- 00:40:00 Landed in San Francisco, my younger brother was here already, and I took over his apartment.
- 00:40:30 I went immediately to a Jewish relief organization, asking them if they knew where I could get a job. Three days later I had a job in San Francisco.
- Q: And when you were drafted?

00:41:00 In those days I was cutting leather coats. I was better than the natives. I got a special union permit. But that ended when the season was slack and I got fired.

00:41:30 I was willing to come back, but in the meantime I went to A NON UNION SHOP. He paid less as a nonunion shop. I saved him money because I utilized the leather better.

00:42:00 Leather has flaws and you have to navigate around them and you can save leather. I asked him for a little more money because the conditions were not as good as in the union place, and his patterns were not as good. He couldn't see it. Then my old company wanted me back, and he could.

00:42:30 But I went anyway. It was only a matter of weeks, I received notice that I had been nominated to be a general in the American army.

00:43:00 I was in in 1942. I spent most of the time in the San Joachim Valley. It was a brand new field when I got there; now its our biggest naval air base. What I didn't know when I got there, I was assigned to the post, not to be shipped around, but I was shipped anyway, to Pecos, Texas.

00:43:30 I was at different flying schools. Then I got an invitation to the headquarters, because of my German language ability. I was tested by Americans who learned the language in high school.

00:44:00 There I learned I was pegged for service with certain branches. It turned out to be very good. From Pecos I was shipped

00:44:30 to Greensboro, North Carolina, where they discovered I had furloughs coming, so they shipped me back to Pecos, where I had my wife. Then back to Greensboro, then to Camp Kilmer, in New Jersey.

00:45:00 To be shipped overseas. This was the time of the Battle of the Bulge. And they didn't have room on the boats for unessential guys like me. We stayed around a while and then we left for Europe, where I came from.

00:45:30 I landed near Glasgow. On the northwest side of England. Transported to London. Stationed at SHAEF, the HQ of Eisenhower. We worked there and prepared ourselves to be shipped to Germany.

00:46:00 The USSBS, Strategic Bombing Survey was established to find out what could have been done to shorten the war. We were distributed to various branches and I was sent

to the submarine department.

- 00:46:30 I was appointed because of my ability to speak German. I could dress up the story, but I'll wait till later. We went to Brussels and from there into Germany by jeep. To Aachen. From there to Essen. Where Krupp's factories were located. From there, to Cologne.
- 00:47:00 Then to Hamburg. And then to Bremen. There, it so happened armistice was breaking out. I went to the town mayor I told him I came from 55 kilometers from there, and I would like to go there.
- 00:47:30 He said we could go the following morning. So the next day, I was in my home town. I was supposed to drive the jeep, an officer was not supposed to drive.
- 00:48:00 My driving experience consisted of maybe 3 or 4 half-hours in Berlin, and then no more. So, a little distance out of Bremen I came too close to a wagon, He said he would take over. Incidentally, we went through a little town
- 00:48:30 where my grandparents and parents came from. On the way, there was a Jewish cemetery and we stopped there. There was not one tombstone standing, except four or five of my family.
- 00:49:00 Just by coincidence. If the Nazis did it, I don't know. Close by is a shipyard, it might have been bombs. I have pictures of that, I can prove it. So we went on to Mullerhaven (ph)
- 00:49:30 There I had an aunt, Aryan, who married my uncle, a Jew, and had a heck of a time. I rang the bell, out she came, looked at me, looked at me again. I didn't say anything.
- 00:50:00 Of course, I was in uniform with a steel helmet. Then I told her. You should have seen that face. To see me, she went off to Japan, to return as an American soldier. Of course, I prepared myself with a few cans
- 00:50:30 I donated them to her. I went back a second time. My uncle had conveniently died before the war. But his son is around, here. That is the one I mentioned who cannot tolerate the mention of the concentration camps.
- 00:61:00 It was a funny coincidence that I was in the right spot. Why did I see - it was bad. The cities that I went through, nothing but rubble.
- 00:51:30 Outlying districts sometimes were preserved. But others, I drove in a jeep for square miles, there was

not one stone you could use.

00:52:00 No, didn't see any concentration camps. We were under the War Department. We had access to secret files. I don't remember where it happened, we were stationed in Hamburg.

00:52:30 I was looking through these books and there I found this cousin of mine, listed as being in Theresien Stadt and could report this to his mother who didn't know where he was.

00:53:00 That was a coincidence too.

Q: How did you find out about the camps?

A: We knew it all along. We saw films of camps that were liberated.

00:53:30 By the time I came to Bremen, they were still fighting on the outskirts, but my outfit was not a combat outfit. We were an investigative unit. When we were in Cologne,

00:54:00 we were on one side, and the other side was not taken. Here I have a story to tell too. Being an investigative we had to wait for the other side of the Rhine to be taken. Finally, it was, but the Germans had a nasty habit. If the bridge wasn't bombed out,

00:54:30 The Germans bombed it. In Cologne there was an important bridge. The bridge was hanging in the water, and to go to the other side, we had to crawl in the water.

00:55:00 We found some books of interest. And since you cannot drive a truck or jeep over a bridge that is submerged, we had to go to Bonn, where they had a pioneer bridge built.

00:55:30 So we went along the Rhine until we got there, and went over. . As we went along, we saw lots of columns of refugees.

00:56:00 We drove and we drove and we didn't get anywhere. All over, the white flags were out - the 1st Lieut. did not speak German - I asked him many times to let me ask where we were.

00:56:30 After a long time, I convinced him, and then he didn't like what we heard and we turned back. The Battle of the Bulge was going on, so we went back.

00:57:00 No. I only saw the books when we crawled over the bridge. We never got the books.

Q: What was your aunt story?

A: My aunt being originally

00:57:30 Aryan, she had a lot of trouble. She had her own business, but she wasn't allowed in her business, but she - my town had a big fishing port - and she was detailed to work at the fish port.

00:58:00 It was not easy work and she was not accustomed to this. I was working at the Holocaust Center here and somebody threw a file on the table and it was about my home town. Two-thirds of the file dealt with my aunt and her troubles. They wanted to

00:58:30 Christianize; Aryanize her. They wanted to convert the company to an Aryan company.

00:59:00 She was a clever women and she fought it all the way. It went all the way to the top man in Germany in this department.

00:59:30 She was able to drag it out until the end of the war. She had to change the name of the company to her brother.

01:00:00 She wasn't there. She would return home from the fish port and direct her brother maybe. So that is the story about my aunt.

Q: Did you look up anyone else when you got home?

A: There wasn't anyone one else.

01:00:30 Who couldn't emigrate was deported and killed. When the Jews of Bremerhaven got notice that at 10:00 o'clock you assemble at station, with a handbag, she wanted to help them, and was there for some purpose of her company

01:01:00 but the Nazis wouldn't allow it. And they were never seen again. Good friends of ours. So what else can I tell you?

Q: When you were in America, did people believe you, these stories, you were telling?

01:01:30 I think it was known by then. Me, born in Germany, coming from Japan, I was twice as suspicious. But being Jewish, that put two and two together. And I think it was my war more than anyone else.

01:02:00 I knew what was going on there, and a lot of people here knew too. Not all of it, it was too grotesque. That the Jews were persecuted must have been well known.

01:02:30 Q How did people react when the subject would come up?

A: People did not know how methodically the Germans worked. Like when people said, "Why don't you go to government and complain . "It won't work"

01:03:00 The extermination camps were just a little faster. But you can read - we saw films of ambassadors fleeing to England - pleading with Roosevelt to bomb Auschwitz to make it harder for the Germans to operate.

01:03:30 The cartoon of Roosevelt with his cigarette holder, saying, "You tell your people that we will win the war." Meaning, later, we will take care of that.

01:04:00 But that didn't scare the Germans. As a matter of fact, nothing scared them. The Germans were forbidden to have a regular army after the first world war.

01:04:30 He built it up. He marched into the Rhineland, which he was forbidden to do. And when he went into Czechoslovakia, there was still time.

01:05:00 Chamberlain thought he had peace in our time. No one was armed. We trained with broomsticks. But then again

01:05:30 they could have put a stop to it if they wanted to. There are two sides to it. For one government to assassinate, doesn't sit too well with our morals.

01:06:00 What kind of grief could have been spared the world. Fifty million people died. And this because this one fanatic wanted to rule the world.

01:06:30 So the question is, "Is it better to kill one man and save 50 million. I don't know. I can't kill anyone. They tried to kill Hitler. I saw him driving by in Berlin. It wasn't easy to kill him.

01:07:00 He went by like a house on fire. The streets were lined with SS. Otherwise, there might have been a few people who wished to finish him.

01:07:30 Q: Did you ever think of getting involved politically?

A: no, I was never politically minded over there.
As long as I could vote, I did. I'll let you in on a secret. I voted Democrat, which was center, or a little left of center.

01:08:00 You could not talk to your next door neighbor, in my time, and say what you wanted to say. I took liberties when I talked with my customers, but one word from them would have been the end of me.

01:08:30 Telling one bad word about the party and you would end up in the concentration camp.

Q: What are some of the lessons of the Holocaust?

01:09:30 A: How well the lessons were learned, there are people who just don't believe it. It is so grotesque and unbelievable, that some get away with it. And we have skin heads

01:10:00 You can't convince them, they know it all. We tried, through the library here, to establish for all time, what happened.

01:10:30 I just read eye witness reports by participating Nazis. This book is worse a thousand times, than what I said, because

01:11:00 It is by the ones who instigated it. I ordered it for the library here. Its called I think, ironically, "Nice Times." Something like that.

01:11:30 Q: It sounds like you didn't encounter much disbelief when you came over here?

01:12:00 The majority of the people could not fathom what was going on. They knew that something was going on, but not the extent of it. And when you talk to Germans now

01:12:20 they say they didn't know how bad it was. But they must have known because in my time people disappeared. They must have known, but the extent of it, maybe not. But then again

01:13:00 in Bremen, we were quarter in some guy's house, and he maintained, no, he was never a Nazi. It was always someone else over there. But since we were quartered in his house, we found his membership card in the SS.

01:13:30 (shrugs shoulders) He didn't do anything. And the SS, the black shirts, as you know, were the elite.

Q: When did you come back from the war?

A: The end of '45 I think.

- 01:14:00 I want to tell you something else, I was stationed in Bremen. This was before the SS man. There was an DS headquarters. DS means Defense Security. They were on top of the SS, in other words, worse than the SS.
- 01:14:30 When we got there, they had just left. We were afraid they had booby-trapped the place. We went down to the cellar and they had a bunch of stuff- antiques - and in the corner was an oven for heating.
- 01:15:00 A stove - and I heard some ticking there. I mobilized the whole gang. I advised my commanding officer that we get out of there. But he disagreed and nothing happened.
- 01:15:30 Anyway, these guys had just left and everything was still standing like they were there. They had a bookshelf there, and I picked out one book that dealt with
- 01:16:00 Jews of Vienna. And they make comparisons between the Nazis, the general population, and the Jews. They categorized it by murder, theft, and so on. The Jews were about 10 times better than the general population.
- 01:16:30 So they were the good guys and the Jews were the bad guys. But the Jews were 10 times more law-abiding than them.
- 01:17:00 But they had to be killed. That's the reasoning behind that.
- Q: What stands out about your return to Germany?
- A: May people won't go. I didn't have these scruples. Maybe I fared too well,
- 01:17:30 I didn't go to a concentration camp. If I had stayed any longer I would have lost my business. With killing off my relatives, with torturing and starvation.
- 01:18:00 I understand their feelings. Like my cousin who can't discuss it. It was too much, too gruesome.
- 01:18:30 I went back - there was a little place close to the city of Bremen, they had a submarine base there, they had those shelters there, though I didn't see them
- 01:19:00 Shelters with big heavy roofs, and so on. There was a guy who asked me how come I spoke German so well. I told him I learned it in school. Turning aside, he said

"You must have been Jewish." Incidentally, since I had access to these secret files

01:19:30 about these submarine pens - the British Admiralty put them out, they had them in France too. With huge roofs. And with every weapon, the other guy tries to invent a counter weapon.

01:20:00 So we invented concrete-penetrating bombs ,and we knocked some stuff off the ceilings, but that was as far AS IT GOT.

01:20:30 The submarines pulled into these sheds. They were built of rock or something. They had very thick ceilings of steel-reinforced concrete, and the concrete had to be special.

01:21:00 We just knocked a little off the cement ceilings.

Q: When did you get married?

A: During my army days, 1943.

Q: And what happened then?

A: Well, the war was going on.

01:21:30 My wife stayed in Pecos. I told you how they sent me to Greensboro, and then back again. She was working there.

01:22:00 I forget where she was working. We had army housing, and no sooner did we move in, I was shipped out. Then, in Greensboro, the staging area

01:22:30 they collected all these guys who spoke, more or less, German. It was interesting, we marched along calling cadence in German. It was a joke, but it was no joke. But I came out alright.

01:23:00 Q: How come you changed your name?

A: Siegfried was a specifically German name and I didn't want to bother my army buddies , so Siegfried - freid was close to Fred. So in the army it was Fred.

01:23:30 When I was in the army, I was able to get citizenship. When I was asked if I wanted to change my name, and I said I would like to make it Fred.

01:24:00 He said to forget it.
(interviewer is reviewing question list)

- 01:24:30 Q: What is your reaction to movies about the Holocaust?
- A: I have no opinion about that. Its very good the way they do it. It should bring it to the people.
However
- 01:25:00 You open a television, there is shooting going on, everything is going on. With all that violence, this is just another violence. It takes so much away from it,
- 01:25:30 no book, no movie can really tell the story. How would you feel if you were in the roll call, and they left you in the snow for hours, or they put water on you and let you freeze,
- 01:26:00 The sadistic treatments that they got, how can you show that in a film? Report : it so that it becomes real. It cannot be done.
- 01:26:30 Q: What happens to you when people tell you to forget the past?
- A : You can't. Even with my old age forgetfulness, I can't forget that. But what I told you, I can back up. This was not thin air that I told you.
- 01:27:00 Q: What do you tell people when they tell you to forget the past?
- A: If you do that, then what we do here is meaningless. now people don't want to remember these things, and the Germans resent that it is always held against them .
- 01:27:30 In a way we should put a bottom line there and forget it because the present generation has nothing to do with it. They don't want to be blamed for their predecessors, yet you can't forget it.
- 01:28:00 History has a way of repeating itself. But it should not be forgotten. We can forgive them - no, we don't forgive the ones who did it. Maybe its surprising coming from me.
- 01:28:30 In Germany you did not have the free will to do what you wanted. In Germany, everything was done according to orders. A soldier is ordered to shoot some Jews or somebody and either he shoots them or he is shot. I read somewhere that they were a little lenient in that respect .

- 01:29:00 But you either do what you are told or else. And your life is usually closer to you and someone else. That explains a lot of things. You could not use your own judgement. One Hitler had
- 01:29:30 the power there was no way to get away from it. Stories circulate and they are no doubt true. There were stories like: little Joe went to school on the 2nd of May and the teacher would ask him
- 01:30:00 Or the class, did everyone have a good time yesterday, you marched, and when it came to the Jew he said that his father didn't care for all that stuff.
- 01:30:30 Next morning, father goes off to the police station, and from there to the concentration camp. So you could not talk in your family. Suppose a husband and wife are divorced and the wife said what the husband once said.
- 01:31:00 The next day it's the concentration camp. There were no two people who could communicate openly. If there were more room, there could be opposition. Often the Jews are blamed
- 01:31:30 People want to know why the Jews didn't form an opposition. The same was true. Maybe among themselves they could talk. But they could not form an organization that puts up resistance.
- 01:32:00 Individuals put up resistance. But no concerted effort could have been made.
- Q: What do you think now when people talk about forgiveness. Like they wanted to let some guy out of jail?
- 01:32:30 A: The crimes committed by these guys, they are so horrendous. We go to jail for murder for life. But these guys killed millions. You can't forgive them.
- 01:33:00 I'm sure there are lots of people who just followed orders and that's what they say. But if someone tells me to shoot an innocent person, I can't do that. I came to Germany with a gun in my hand, I couldn't go around and kill indiscriminately.
- 01:33:30 If a soldier meets another soldier, it's one or the other. But unarmed or innocent people, I - before I immigrated, I had to go to the police and get a certificate that I had never committed any crime whatsoever.

01:34:00 So me, a Jew who would have been killed for nothing,
has never committed a crime. Proved by the stamp of
the Nazi authorities.

01: 34: 30 Thank you

A: Your welcome. I was very :Lucky. A few more months
and it would have been a different story.

.END.