

Formal introduction. I'd really like to have what you're saying on the tape. That's important. And we could even get some of that.

Well, as far as talking about the Holocaust to people, when I first met American soldiers when I was liberated, there were some GIs who happened to have gone by a camp, or seen a camp, or liberated a camp.

But the ones that I encountered mostly had been through military battles. And they were quite experienced. And also, there were some new ones who had never been in battle, who had just been sent over.

But it didn't make any difference. They were so petrified with the horror of what went on that they were choked with emotion. And it was very difficult for the teller to watch the pain.

And the people, when I met civilians, when I came to the United States, it was really harder on the listeners than the tellers, because the tellers knew that they were out of it.

And for the listeners, it was reliving an experience which they feared in their minds. And there was an enormous amount of guilt in everybody who had never been in the camps.

And I think it's a misfiring of some psychological mechanism. It's a misfiring of empathy, and of compassion, of a sense of duty, of a sense of community and belonging that Jews who came from Europe had because they lived in communities where there were strong ties. Even if they were distant ties-- distant locations, they were still strong ties.

And most came from fairly large families-- not unusual for them to have three, four brothers, and so on. And all families were decimated. So sitting around the table, they started counting who's not here. And it was very difficult for them to do that. And they lived with the knowledge-- not even knowledge. I think they were convinced that had they done something more, we would be alive.

So it was difficult to bring up these topics and talk about them. It was easier to talk to younger people, whose minds had never conjured these images. And to them, it was a horror. But it wasn't the horror that they carried in their hearts for years that they feared and then confronted with the reality of a survivor.

And so a lot of people didn't talk about it. Or if you talked about it, you talked about it in the sense that oh, yes, I was in the camps, and not in detail-- go into great detail about what happened and so on. And they knew so many people were lost.

There was also a sense of suspicion among some that survivors survived because it was a kind of, quote, "survival of the fittest." And the feeling of survivors is the sense that why me? Because so many wonderful people died, you know, why me? And that was difficult to articulate. Some still do. And it was a very painful dilemma.

There is also the fear of-- let me say, going through a camp is not a trust-inspiring process. First of all, the ordinary relations that exist in what I would call healthy communities tend to form some relations, at least, that unquestionably fall in the trust category.

And there are others that are more distant or more formal. And then there are those people that we, quote, "distrust." So the world goes from a trust and no trust category.

And the effect of the concentration camp is that you have to make a fast decision whom you can trust and whom you can't ever trust. The chances are that the people you can't trust can really cost you your life in terms of another prisoner.

Could be a prisoner who steals or a prisoner who will steal your food, or your clothing, or your mess kit-- you know, a pen-- if you have a kit in which you don't have a mask. It's actually a bowl of some kind. And if you have that bowl to get your food and you don't have the bowl, you don't get food. So stealing a bowl is as good as stealing your life.

And I'm sure you've heard convicts say that they don't have to see a policeman's badge to know that there's a policeman in their presence. And life in Eastern Europe tended to develop that kind of sensitivity. I know I remember riding a bus in New York and suddenly feeling uncomfortable. And I'd look around. And I knew who the cop was.

Can you describe any details of what were clues for you?

It is a very cold, appraising glance. It is very keen observation, never staring. It's not somebody who really stares. But they glance. And that this glance photographed you side and front and compared you. And it is a very cold and appraising glance. And it's not obvious. But nevertheless, it's there.

And there are such things as eyes of killers. Now, I sometimes see those eyes. And I don't think they're killers. But these people are ruthless competitors. And part of survival is if you face these, you must act fast. And you must act rapidly-- either get out of the way or be prepared for the worst.

And survivors tend to estimate that very rapidly. You knew which guards were just murderers and which kapos were just murderers. And you didn't go near them, because they could explode at any time.

What did you do when you ever ran into a fellow prisoner that you might feel is in that category?

I put as much distance between that prisoner and myself, never turned my back on him. I never hid anything so he could see it. For example, prisoners would hang a piece of bread wrapped in something on a nail, on a wall. In some prison barracks, you can hang your whole bread ration there. Nobody will touch it.

And other places, you don't. You just look around. And you get a sense of that. And they will steal food. And stealing food is the equivalent of stealing life. And there are places where they would leave just a string on somebody's bed, because they stole food. It meant they should go hang themselves.

Did you ever have an instance where you had to defend yourself against somebody? Like, I mean, where you couldn't leave the situation.

No. No, I was very lucky. I was mostly in places-- I was lucky because until, as I mentioned to you, till January 10, 1945, I was with my father. So I was in there next to somebody whom I could trust completely. And we learned to cut bread very accurately. So we would both get the same amount. My father would always do it. And I kept telling him, I said, I don't want to live knowing that I took your bread.

And often, prisoners who-- if they'd issued a ration of bread to two prisoners, and they would want that bread cut, or they had transacted some business-- you know, people literally sell bread for a knife, or a cup, or whatever-- then they would come over. And we would cut the bread in two for them. Because I had that knife for a long time. That was my grandfather's knife--

Yes.

--I smuggled through.

Were you were also trusted to be cutting fairly?

Yeah. Yeah.

What would happen in the instance of, say, the string is put, and the person doesn't kill themselves?

They would usually be strangled at night.

Someone was designated to do this?

No, more than one person-- two or three would. The prisoners were too weak.

It took two or three?

Yes.

Did this imply some kind of even loose organization?

Oh, yeah. It doesn't come about as a decision. It's an accepted rule that everybody's entitled to survive without taking advantage of the survival rights of others. And it's implied. And no one hands you a rulebook.

Usually, when you get to a new camp, someone there will-- they're telling someone who will tell you what things are going on. But again, in who you go to or who you ask, that's a big decision, because if you go to a killer, you're going to die. So that's part of survival.

But the other part of survival-- and I want to emphasize that very strongly-- is you'd be surprised how many people pick you up when you're falling down, without knowing you or caring.

You know, I was talking to a class in a high school. And I remembered an event when we were first in the Hungarian concentration camp. And these Yugoslav families had been repatriated down from Yugoslavia to northwestern Hungary. They just saw we were hungry. They didn't know where we came from. They didn't know anything. They just saw we were hungry. And there were kids, and adults, and so on.

And they just started throwing bread over the fence. Nobody offered them money. Nobody offered them jewels. Nobody offered them wedding rings. Nobody offered them anything. And in remembering the horror, which was so horrendous, we also have to remember that there were others.

In current discussions of Holocaust survivors, there's one school of thought which says that there is something terrible in all of us. And we must guard against this. And therefore, put it very prosaically that there is a Hitler in all of us. And we're all capable of being a Hitler and so on.

I really don't believe that. And I'll tell you why I don't believe that. I think that there are people, certainly, who have these enormous drives at a greater or lesser degree to dominate others, increasingly. And the more dominant they are, the more dominant they want to be. So once you enter this, it's a self-propelled tendency. It's a self-stimulating tendency.

But if you take a look at the troops during the Second World War, one of the best kept secrets about troops is that very few people fire their rifles. Then by the time the Korean War came along, the army did special studies. They would take a whole rifle company off the front lines and check who really fired their rifles. And it turns out that very few of them did.

And difference, in fact, in modern armies and those armies are that these armies are converted into killers. Before, these were citizen armies. These were citizens who were armed, who would fire, essentially, in self-defense. But these were not programmed, massaged, manipulated, and deliberate killers. And that's what contemporary soldiers are trained to be. They just kill with a high efficiency. But they have to be converted to that. That's not something that they bring too.

Now, if you take the situation in the concentration camps, there were many people who would not do some things. And they paid for it with their lives. And they knew they were going to pay for it with their lives. And there were many others who helped under the most dire of circumstances when it cost them.

And when you're barely standing, and you help somebody else walk, you're barely walking. And you're on the edge of that precipice also. And they did it. And that told me something that this is not an even distribution of the tendency to dominate, because if all you are interested is in survival, then you don't help anybody. You save every bit of strength. You're helpful either for yourself and no one else.

But that's not what happened. And if a group of people get together, even if they fight in private, when they're faced with a purpose, namely survival, you'll see them reaching toward each other. They may not be nice to each other or pleasant, but they reach toward each other. And I think we underestimate that tendency in men.

That's a good point.

I think just as, especially in contemporary life, one finds that criticism is better remembered by most people than legitimate praise. We suspect legitimate praise. We do not suspect legitimate criticism or what we consider legitimate criticism.

Along those lines, I know in previous interviews, you talked about the inspiration of, I believe, the Danish people.

Yeah.

And of course, I know, obviously, a great sustenance to you was having your father with you--

Yeah.

--as long as you did. And I can see you have a very good sense of humor.

I have to.

So along those lines, was your sense of humor still functioning in the camps?

Oh, yes. Yes, I'm sorry, I didn't tell you about that. Now, I remember an instance, for example, when we were in Bavaria. I think we were in Kaufering, in Kaufering camp. We went to work.

And as we went to work, we crossed a little river. And there was a bridge on this river. And there was a railing on the bridge. And during lunch time, we were resting. And we were eating. One of the guards took his hat off. And the wind blew the guard's hat in the water.

This caused a solid five hours of mirth. All you had to say, the hat, and 200 people would be laughing. There were all kinds of jokes. A lot of it is humor of the gallows. But certainly, humor survived.

What kind of humor of the gallows?

Well, I don't remember jokes very well. I remember.

If you remember. If not, OK.

I remember one joke. But actually, that comes from the era before. Oh, yes. The joke is that a very religious Jew is stopped on the street by Gestapo men and marched into this restaurant. And the guy orders a pork steak and a big dinner for him.

He takes out his gun and points it to him and says, eat it. And the guy says I can't, you know. It's pork. He says, I've got a gun. He says, well, in that case, you know, it is permitted for me to eat. So he starts eating, of course.

And this joke is told in the context that there hasn't been any food for three years. And he hasn't seen a piece of meat in probably four, and so, and so. He's eating away. And the SS man relaxes and puts the gun down. And he looks up. He says, would you mind holding the gun till I finish the plate? It's like that.

Right, Jewish law.

Yeah.

That is cute.

It must be observed.

So in the positive realm, what other kinds of things sustained?

Well, we had a lot of discussions about-- endless talks about food. It's a terrible thing. The hungrier people get, the more they talk about food. Elaborate dinners, we planned. Elaborate dinners, we ate. Elaborate restaurants people had been to all around the world-- I mean, it was a fairly mixed group.

And my father had been in London. And he had been in Paris. And been in Vienna, Budapest, and a number of German cities. Though he didn't go to Germany very often-- I think relatively little. I know he had a friend in Hamburg.

But my father had an agreement with his boss that everybody considered English cooking on the continent to be abysmal. And so for every day he had to do business in London, he got a day in Paris to rectify the diet when he traveled for this company country.

And so they'd go through the elaborate meals then. And he had eaten at Maxim's and other places. It was an awful lot of talk about this. There was also a lot of talk about what the world will be like after the war.

And I remember him talking to me about that. And they had various debates about where the borders would be. And I must say that they guessed on the borders pretty well, except that they thought that Germany would be broken in individual states and that there would be a demilitarized zone through the center of Europe, because they felt that the Russians would never trust the West. The West would never trust the Russians. So there would be a demilitarized zone in between the two.

And they thought that-- I don't know if you recall the Morgenthau Plan. We knew about-- Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, was a proponent of this plan-- this was secretary of Treasury under Roosevelt, I believe. And this was very influential family.

Morgenthau, his plan for Germany was to convert it into an agrarian country. And they'll never make another piece of steel. And every time they need a piece of steel, they'd have to buy it from somebody else-- and essentially, destroy the German industry this way, and so, and so.

Well, that didn't work out. And I don't know how realistic it was. But they thought that that's what the Allies would do. They didn't think that-- they thought that all the small countries in the east would fall under Russian influence, just as it did happen.

They thought that Western countries would tend to fuse, would tend to merge their currencies, because it would help reconstruction so much more there. It's amazing what visions. And these were-- some were engineers. And some were-- my father was an economist.

They viewed a much more united Europe. And we thought that nobody could ever muster an army that was a draft army. You'd only have volunteer armies or armies of mercenaries, essentially, again, because after the Second World War, nobody was fool enough to go in the army unless they were highly paid. Those were the kind of fantasies that we discussed.

Were there any fantasies of any sorts of vengeance or justice?

Yes, yes. Certainly, there were. There were. But the truth is that there were reprisals in very early part after liberation. And in my personal experience, right after the end of the-- after I was liberated, I went to work in a displaced persons camp. I don't know. We'll get there.

You can. We're not on the chronology yet. So we haven't--

OK

--got there yet.

OK. I went to work in the displaced persons camp. And in the displaced persons camp-- this displaced persons camp was located in town called Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Garmisch-Partenkirchen was where the 1936 Olympics were held. It's a great resort. And it's a ski resort, summer resort, has casinos, and all that.

And just outside it was a German military camp. And that's where the displaced person camp was placed. And the displaced person camp was later moved. And a war criminals camp was established at the same site. And I worked there, also, as an interpreter in both cases.

Well, right when we were liberated, we were too weak, really, to really take reprisals, because in order to fire, a gun would have knocked our shoulder off. And we didn't have weapons for that matter.

But by the time I'd been in this displaced persons camp for a while, and then there was the war criminals camp there, when we were interrogating people in the war criminals camp, I remember interrogating.

The way the prisoners are handled here, the most difficult thing to do after a war is to identify that the person you think you have is the person that you have, because the tremendous amount of forged papers, forged identities. So each, we got a list of prisoners. And you have to identify. Are these the people we have?

One of these a Wehrmacht general who was Hitler's Wehrmacht aide and all kinds of SS men. And Tito, who was the Quisling of Czechoslovakia, Tito was an ordained priest, Catholic priest. And he was relieved of his sacraments by a papal nuncio. And then the Americans removed his protection. And he was treated like other prisoners. But until then, he was an ordained priest, which was handled with kid gloves.

Now, there, I interrogated prisoners. And sometimes, a prisoner-- well, at this time, I should tell you that I was obviously an ex-concentration camp inmate. I didn't have a uniform on. I had civilian clothes on. My face was still pretty thin. And bones were still showing. Probably was 5 foot 3" and probably weighed about maybe 95 pounds or so.

But I had recovered my ability to walk. And so you couldn't tell the walk. Usually you can an ex-prisoner by the shuffled walk, because it's only the tendons that hold everything together. And prisoners don't have a spring in their walk at all-- starving prisoners, that is.

And I remember that this Hitler's adjutant told me that he doesn't want to talk to Jews. And I took a riding crop. And I hit him across the face. And I said, come with me. And I made them do what they used to do to us. And you stand at attention facing the sun. And it's an excruciating thing. And then he stood at attention there. He went to show what a good soldier you are.

And I told him, you're going to stand there until you fall. And the American GIs gave me a rifle. He says, you want to shoot him, no one here is going to stop you. And I said, no, no. I don't want to live with the knowledge that I killed somebody. And I interrogated him again afterwards. And he gave me a snide remark and called me a dirty Jew. And I picked up a stick and I broke it on him.

And I thought I would feel better at the end of it. And I didn't. And I realized that I couldn't get even ever. And at the end of the war, when I was liberated, if someone would have given me a machine gun, I probably would have fired without thinking. But that told me that I can't ever get.

At the end of the war, I wanted my parents. And I had a lot of anger, a lot of hostility. I also knew that nothing, that absolutely nothing would bring them back. And there was no getting even. There was no satisfaction in it.

So I think it was a beginning for me that helped me distance myself from Europe. As I think I've said before, I never regretted leaving. I was looking to leave right then. It's true that before the war, my father's idea was that I would become an engineer and go to Cyprus.

It was very easy getting British citizenship by moving-- not to Cyprus, to Malta. Malta is a malaria-infested colony. And the British used to use a lot of foreign engineers there who worked in Malta naval shipyards.

And if you stayed in Malta, I think, for two years, you became a British citizen. Then you could go anywhere you wanted to go. And a lot of people got out of Europe that way, bypassing quota problems, and such.

But how did you deal with your rage, even as you knew you weren't going to exact satisfaction? I think my rage-- I think that helped me diffuse my rage. And time helped diffuse my rage. Yeah, I was in a rage at times when I was a teenager in New York.

But my rage was because I felt like a fish out of water. I didn't belong to teenagers. And I really didn't relate to teenagers very well after my experiences. I mean, these teenagers, their problem was will they get a ticket to the next Frank Sinatra concert, or will they get a date, or will they get a new pair of shoes, or all the kind of things that teenagers worry about very legitimately.

And it really affected my son very negatively, because I could not understand his concerns as a teenager. I couldn't understand that. I thought that he was living in a world that was incredibly secure, that he never had to worry about his food or his clothing. And I wanted that.

I didn't bring him up with a sense of survival that I was brought up in, that be prepared for the worst and you won't be disappointed. But I thought that he somehow would automatically gain a depth of understanding of life and proportions, which is really irrational on my part.

Teenagers don't have that and can't be expected to have that. But I certainly wasn't understanding of his problems, and his moodiness, and that. And I thought they were just trivial things.

Well, you were robbed of your childhood in many ways.

Yeah. Yeah. My experiences were-- well, let me say that my childhood wasn't so happy. I've never craved to be another age besides myself. I think the benefit of having grown up in Europe was that wrinkles aren't a sin.

And I remember, as a young kid, looking at French movie stars who were wrinkled, as a matter of fact, and thinking that they were incredibly beautiful. So I didn't have this kind of background. And to me, my childhood, you know, my parents were divorced. And I went back and forth. It wasn't all that happy that I wanted to go back to it. I can't point.

You know, some people say, well, I was happiest between 13 and 15 or 15 and 17, 18. And that certainly wasn't my experience. And so I didn't feel robbed in the sense. I felt robbed from the ties of friendship and belonging I did have a very hard time feeling part of.

I didn't know where that started or stopped, because every time I was part of something when I was a teenager, then I was kicked out either because I was Jewish over there. And here, I obviously didn't fit in. And kids were, really, very nice when I came to this country. But I was, really, a weird duck for them.

Well, one of the ways-- that's kind of what I was meaning is that you had to become an adult almost instantly, probably when you--

Yeah.

--were kicked out of your home and couldn't even finish your childhood in this whole process.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I probably became more of an adult when my father had his nervous breakdown when he lost his job. And then we went to the camps. And then I knew that I had to protect him more, because there was no one else. And we certainly protected each other. And I'm sure it has a lot to do with my survival.

Well, maybe there's more of the positive things, too, that we could land on as we go along. I was thinking from the terrible, negative ones too, of suicide, of insanity, of cannibalism, or the Muselmann.

The Muselmans, you learned. All those literary expressions marked by death or the light went out of their eyes are really true, that there are people who self-condemn themselves.

Now, as far as suicides are concerned, actually, there were very, very few. There were very, very few. Now, I think I was protected by it because I was so young. And I didn't project to the future. I think my father was protected from it, because it wouldn't have occurred to him to abandon me any more than I would have abandoned him-- you know, in one transport, going from my hometown to the Hungarian camp, there was a point where they left the door open.

The guards all went for some instruction. And there was a clear shot. And there was one guy in our group who had been this guy, who had been a prize fighter and a waiter, who was sort of moving on the edge of the underworld, and a kind of a sort of semi-legitimate character. And he was absolutely an inspiring leader in our hours of need when all the legitimate members of society were really falling apart because their world fell apart.

But he knew what to do. He knew how to bargain with a guard. He knew how to tie a rope well. He knew all kinds of things. And he says, oh, let's go. And he asked me first, because two people can boost their defenses higher than a single person. And I wasn't tall, but I was strong enough. And I couldn't even think of leaving my father, to abandon him. And I'm sure he felt the same way.

I'm remembering now--

There is good and bad in that, because it's very-- my father's wisdom was that it matters how you survive. And it matters what you do. And that may be a positive aspect of a terrible encounter, that you face what a lot of people face in terms of life's crises is a resonating question that was present in their minds, probably since they were teenagers. And they never faced. And I was just forced to make an earlier decision

In this regard, you talked about that terrible moment when, I think, you and your father were in the shower.

Yeah.

And I believe you said the guard had whipped your father. And he couldn't get up.

My father had been beaten before that. And he was weak. And he couldn't get up. And they were coming with whips and drove us off. And I probably had never felt more powerless in my life. And I know I'm walking backward, because I didn't want to turn my back on my father.

And the human terror of feeling that humiliation of being helpless, even though you know there was nothing that you could do--

Yeah.

--but still, you feel humiliated--

Yeah.

--in a strange way, it seems. Or even nothing.

Well, let me say that to me, humiliation is to be found, one thing, in your deepest values by yourself. And in that sense, it was a humiliation. It wasn't the powerlessness, because I've never been particularly interested in power. I choose my jobs that way.

When I was with boys at the end of the war who survived and I was the only one who spoke English, I suddenly had power over these kids. And to me, that power bought such a crushing responsibility, I felt their survival was in my hands. I made the bad decision, they wouldn't live. I'd live, but they wouldn't live. And that probably influenced me not to ever seek such a position again.

What do you mean by that, you made a decision?

If I asked for the wrong medicine for them, if I didn't see to it that they had blankets, if I didn't see to it that they had water, because I knew more. And one of the things that was instilled in me was that with knowledge comes obligation. And that the more you know, the more you're obliged to do.

During the war, we helped people because we were in a position to help people. It was our duty to help people. And that was a very, very important value in my mind.

So when my-- I'm sure I believe the same thing when my father was lying on the floor and couldn't get up. I was humiliated because I couldn't find anybody to pick him up. And I wasn't strong enough to pick him up. I remember pulling on his arm.

And I remember, my first thought when the war ended, when I met this American soldier who was listening to the radio-- it was May 1st. And everybody thinks it's May 8th, actually. May 1st, most of the hostilities stopped. Officially in Europe, they signed it May 7th. Here, it's celebrated May 8th. The very first thought is where is my father?

Well, we hadn't been together for so long. I told you that I-- at that time, I thought my mother was still in the camp someplace. Later on, I found that she was dead by the time I got to Auschwitz. It's just that my aunt didn't tell me.

I'll say that from time to time, I look at my daughter and I really resent the fact that my parents never got to see their grandchildren. I think they both would have enjoyed them very much.

And vice versa?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, I'm sure that my father would have done OK here. And I'm sure my mother would have thrived here. And I have absolutely no doubt that she would be involved in 10,000 organizations. She would march in everything that you can imagine, and that she'd run 10 shops on the side.

But I think that both my father and my mother would have liked it here more. And ironically, they were better adapted to this country because both, in their own way, had distanced themselves from the culture that they came from much more so than many other people who came here.

And the sorrow that your children didn't enjoy them either.

Yeah. And there was a time when-- ah, holidays were painful for me as a child, because I had to divide my attention between my father and my mother. And when I was going to college, I hated holidays, because all my friends would go home. And I didn't have a place to go.

But when eventually, I had a family, I would look up. And I would say, where is the other part? My first wife had her parents. And they would come and visit on occasion. And my present wife's parents and two brothers are around, their families. I sort of feel like a one-winged bird.

So that sense of a core belonging, that was--

There was a sense, yeah.

--a big part of your life thereafter?

Yeah. That I didn't know which family I belonged in. And although my aunt's family was very nice, still, I did miss my parents. And there are those little holidays when my daughter has a concert, I do wish, then, that they would be there to enjoy her.

I think that the loss of family is the most devastating loss. And it's strange to me that when children are taught history, they're so carefully taught to remove history from themselves, that it becomes ever so remote. It's as if it happened to someone else in a remote world.

And I think that particularly the parts of history that focus on conflict-- wars and such-- which unfortunately, turns out to be the way history is taught, about 90% of it-- and didn't need to be that way-- this is distance as if it's somebody else.

Or when I was going to graduate school, and my son and I were living together in Davis, and he would turn on the TV, and as I was cooking in the afternoon, that's about the news hour, between 5:00 and 6:00. And they would show these. And then they would show the Viet Cong and others.

And I used to turn around to him. And I used to say, those are mothers and fathers. Remember, those are mothers and fathers. And you know, as kids are apt to do, they're enthralled with the excitement of war. And I kept repeating, those are mothers and fathers. And I think that should be taught in history books.

Very good point.

The other that should be taught is that humans have done something else besides shoot and kill each other. All of my students in bacteriology I pulled up for the last 20 years, there was one student who knew the name of Weitzman. One in 20 years. And that was a relative of a Potok, Chaim Potok. She was taking my class. But the others didn't know who Weitzman was or what he contributed, besides his political contribution.

Oh.

Besides his political. Some may have known, but no one knew that he did something else also. And he's a strange person, because his scientific work and his political work were involved. But I regret that I can't look at human activities in a much more positive light. And you look at that history of great ideas, most of the long-term murderers aren't there.

That's true.

And I regret that children are taught this. And it happens to my daughter too. And it happen to my son and so on. And I think, if there is something that to arm people about such a thing as the goodness in man, it needs as much tending as their physical health. And it needs enriching.

And there's a very strong tendency in the social sciences-- and I've become aware of it since I participated in a Holocaust course-- to denigrate men. I think there's such a horribly efficient critique of every human activity that people forget that there were visionaries, that there were people who created the possibility of human survival under conditions no one ever imagined, and people who discovered fertilizer, made it possible for other people to live.

People who talked about food preservations extended the life of societies. And people who discovered a nail made possible to build. And I've tried many times to find out who invented the nail and the board. The inventor cannot be named.

Maybe it's so ancient ancient.

Why is it that Babylonian kings names we know? And I bet they were glorified murderers--

Right.

--and incredible tax collectors, and all this. But I'd like to find out the name of the man who planned the first city. And what was in his mind or her mind? What went on in creation? Why is it that buildings are built the way they are built? And I think that would put children in a different frame of mind. I know my competitiveness and such. But why can't we compete in these ways?

I hope you do that.

Yeah. I hope so.

That's all our interview.

I'll do it. Yeah. Well, let's see. Do you want to take a break?

At this moment, we-- well, we could--

OK.

--because now--

As an individual and as a generic unit of that society-- and I have a hard time dealing with this generic notion. But I must admit that there is some commonality in experience. I think that the long-term non-healing aspect, my opinion is that some of the long-term non-healing aspects are general to society as a whole and have little to do with the Holocaust.

It's hard to separate those, because there's no good control data. We can't muster people, people who had trauma before the Holocaust, entered the Holocaust, and had less, or people who didn't have-- and came with very good backgrounds, and so on, and did very well afterwards.

Well, in my opinion, as I said-- and this is a superficial opinion based on survivors that I've known and various discussions that I've had with them-- I think that there are some problems which predated the Holocaust and followed after the Holocaust. There are many adaptations to life or our way of adapting to life-- by our, meaning Holocaust survivors-- changed partly because of our experience.

But it was also influenced by my previous exposures. And the life's history, our genetics, our families, our environment, and the level of interaction with the world, all of which varied all over the landscape.

I think that it influenced me personally, for example, that I chose certain kinds of jobs. I chose specialties. It never occurred to me, for example, to go into a field where I couldn't earn a living anywhere in the world. I didn't even seriously consider it.

I mean, to me, for example, the idea-- I'm interested in law, for example, as a way of reasoning or as an intellectual pursuit. But I wouldn't be a lawyer for 30 seconds, because I know that lawyers are made by laws. And the moment you cross a border, you're no longer a lawyer.

I'm a food technologist anywhere in the world. I'm a bacteriologist anywhere in the world. I don't have to talk the language, and I can earn a living. And that is something that is true, my father started, but the Holocaust emphasized, that when you're left on your own, it's only what's between your ears that's going to carry you on and nothing else.

I chose to work in food, probably because I was deprived of food. When I was giving alternatives and research projects, I never chose working on ornamental plants, because I know that people can live without ornamental plants. I have friends who are in microbiology, worked on ornamental plants, or some people who worked on other things that seemed. And I tended to go for something that is widely used.

And some people view that as a sign of insecurity. And in their system, maybe it is. For me, its adaptiveness. I learned how to adapt. And I don't want to bet on systems that I really consider very temporary.

So when I came to this country, I was always amused when people said, what do you want to be? As if there was a direct connection with what I want to be and what I'm going to be. Now, that exists much more so here. But somehow, it reminded me of a cork being tossed in an ocean, which is what I felt like.

And they thought they were in a road in which they were guiding their own car. And I thought that it was a huge illusion that they were going to only go down roads that they choose. But I didn't want to confront them about it.

But I didn't for a moment believe that I was master of my fate. As it turns out, I was probably more master of my fate than I estimated. But my experience was such of being tossed around like a cork that I wanted to make sure that this cork floats.

Yes, yes.

I'm sorry, what?

No, I was-- go ahead.

Yes, you want to--

I was wondering, when you were talking about when you came back, and teenagers were worrying about what movie they were going to see, and so on, and the gulf between your experience and your reality there-- and I was just wondering, how did you make that work for you? What or where didn't it work? Or where did you make it work?

Well, I discovered when I went to high school in Los Angeles-- I went to Fairfax High School from November '45-- so end of November '45 till early February. So there was a Christmas vacation in there. And then I went back to school. And then I went to New York.

So in that period of time-- well, first of all, this was an era where the social life was the central role of the high school. And I couldn't believe that, because going to school in Europe-- first of all, it's not fun. No one expects it to be fun. There's nothing.

You expect to do an awful lot of hard work, because doing well in school meant the future. You don't go to gymnasium, you're going to be a ditch digger, unless you go into some business somehow. So your life is marked.

And the other thing is that you carry a little book, in which they write every infraction, and every grade, and so on. And when you graduate, or when you take the baccalaureate exam from gymnasium, people look at it. And some crime you committed in what is the equivalent of fifth grade here or first year gymnasium there can keep you from a job, or a school, or so on. So school is much more in earnest than it is here.

If I characterize the American system, I would say there are many accesses to goals in America, much more than people actually take advantage of. And in Europe, the access is very, very narrow, very limited. And I don't know how it is now. But at that time, it was if you didn't stay on the straight and narrow, you would never get back on the straight and narrow.

So this notion of school being fun actually made me suspicious and alarming. Maybe this was not the real thing. This must be a joke. Then I noticed that I'd been out of school for about a year and a half, the equivalent of a year and a half. And I was ahead in math.

I learned English by talking English and by hearing English. And I really didn't write English very well. So Romanian is a Romance language. And the spelling is very phonetic. And Hungarian is not quite as phonetic, but still more phonetic

than English. And spelling enough is enough to drive you nuts-- and other words. And there are some. Enough, actually, is like genug in German.

But it's difficult. It was difficult for me to learn to write. And that was a little difficult. But as far as history and math was concerned, I kept wondering, where were these guys? I was afraid, when I was liberated, that I had forgotten to write. Because in all the time that I was in the camps, I never had pencil and paper. I got one note once from my aunt. And that was it. And scratched in the sand.

And I discovered pretty soon that I could write. I hadn't forgotten how to write. But I was mostly an interpreter in terms of translating spoken words rapidly. That was my job both when I worked for the DP camp, and I worked for the military government, when I worked for the war criminals camp.

So when I went from having been in Paris and all that, so here I was in a high school in LA. The girls were wearing men's white shirts, because they were very hard to get then. And they had to have a lot of signatures. And I didn't know what these signatures meant, or if they had any meaning at all. And there were all kinds of in-words and slang, which puzzled me.

In my normal development, I was very interested in athletics as a kid. And I played soccer. And I was in gymnastics. Well, you know, gymnastics is not exactly big in this country. And at that time, soccer was unknown, or dead, or played by a few European teams of adults who were recent immigrants. And so there wasn't much interaction at this level.

And in Europe, people my age talked politics. And nobody in America talked politics in 1945. I mean, there was no either local, state, or national. I mean, it's a very trivial kind of politics.

So I didn't have much to talk about with other kids. So I kept quiet and went along sometimes. But I really felt like a fish out of water. Now, I didn't understand girls at all, because I was going out with girls in Paris who were going to college. And these were high school girls. And they were always dressed very dramatically and very provocatively. But they were obviously incredible innocents. And they're very, very confusing.

And so I didn't have many friends, although people were very nice to me. And they invited me to their homes. And it's also true I didn't have a car. So my mobility was limited. But I did catch rides with others.

And I would say-- and the kids were very accepting and very good-natured. And they went out of their way to show me things at that Fairfax High School. But their social life was seldom interrupted by study. And there was a dance every day at noon.

The most difficult thing in high school was that every morning, when you got to school, you had to walk a mile and run a mile. In those days, physical education was very much emphasized in all California schools, which I'm sorry to say, it isn't. And you ought to take a look at the difference in physical performance. It was an absolute. You couldn't get out of it, no matter what.

Well, unknown to me, at that time, I had a bone chip in my foot, which was later repaired at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Just I should make a mental note, I have to talk about that, because they were a model of compassion, a model. They were a hospital, what a hospital should be in the most modern sense of the word.

Well, do you want to talk about that now, now that you're thinking of it?

Oh, sure. When I got to New York, to my aunt's house, she discovered that, after walking a few blocks, I limped. My foot was sore. So I was going to high school then. This is Stuyvesant High School in New York. Stuyvesant is one of the three or four schools that you need to take an exam to get into.

And I got there because the high school that I would have gone to, my neighborhood high school, my aunt told me, they're throwing the teacher out the window, second-story window, already. So this was, as I said, 1946. They had some problems.

So I took the exam. And I was admitted to Stuyvesant High School. And they were also very understanding. Because on the exam, they gave inches and miles. And I just crossed it out. And I said, the international units recognized are the centimeter, and the second, and so on.

And I said, as far as this problem is concerned, I said, one inch equals one centimeter. And they accepted my answers based on that. And I got in there. And the high school, it was an all boys high school, which we all regretted.

But the teachers were incredibly well-trained. They all had master's degrees in their fields, not in education. And the best-known student in the school was a guy who solved a very difficult problem in mathematics and also one in physics. And the next best one was probably the head of the physics club, who had also gotten a prize in physics.

The student that they would talk about, who came up with an original solution to a difficult homework problem-- there were ordinary homework problems, and then there was always one or two killer problems. And whoever solved those, it would be known that that's the guy who solved it. And the school was aimed toward scientists and engineers.

But the social sciences were extremely well-taught. And we had a year of history, one taught by an admitted strong leftist. And the other one was a strong rightist. And we sat in class according to political parties from left to right. The science was very well taught and not by rote at all.

And they were enormously tolerant of individual students' idiosyncrasies. The same week that I got there, they were talking about the fundamental structure of the atom. And the instructor put down the old theory of the atom-- you know, a golf ball in the center and little circles around it.

A student jumped up and went in a tirade at the top of his lungs, which he said, you think we're idiots. You have contempt for us. You think we don't know that what you just put on the board is wrong. And it is outdated. And you're insulting. I will not be insulted like this. And with that, he marched out and slammed the door.

I thought that the class would be executed. We'd be hung by our thumbs outside the window, that we would never darken the door of another educational institution, because that's what would have happened in Europe. This is mass insurrection.

And the teacher, who was known as the Undertaker among the students-- and I was told that the first day, because he always wore a black suit, a white shirt, and a black tie, and taught physics very well, though said, well, that's one opinion. The fact is that this is how we start off. Later on, we will go to the advanced one. And then he turned around and went on with the lecture. And I said, jeez, how tolerant. And they were tolerant.

And there, they made every effort to help students learn. But they were very high standards of performance. So just doing your homework meant that you were just getting along. What they expected was that the homework was original, that you'd come up with an original question in class, that you read more than the textbook in both science and non-science courses, and that you were prepared to debate any issue that comes up.

They had very little tolerance for disruption. You got one warning. Then if you disrupted the class, then you'd be sent back to your district school. The school had Blacks and Puerto Ricans in it.

And I kept wondering why they talked about white schools, because this was not an all-white school. And this school is down in the lower-- well, it's between 13th and 14th Street off First and Second Avenue. So it's close to the Lower East Side. A lot of the kids came out of the Lower East Side slums. And this was their way out.

And they had a wonderful spirit of inquiry. And the least-known people were the football players. I mean, they had a football team, but it appeared once-- you know, the school's in the middle of a block. And the gym is subterranean, literally. And it has a running track, you know, that's elevated above the gym floor. So it was an atypical high school. After my experience in Los Angeles, it was very atypical.

Anyhow, when I had this problem with my foot, I went to my advisor, and I said, I have to go. What I do about this sort of thing? He says, oh, we have a special fund. We match the first visit to the doctor from this fund. And I remember that.

And this is 19-- as I said, 1946. And a visit to the doctor at that time was \$20. I earned \$0.50 an hour working at a pharmacy around the corner from where I lived. And my aunt and uncle were not well-off. He was essentially disabled with asthma. And they had three kids. So they paid \$10. And I paid \$10.

And we got to a very fancy Park Avenue specialist in orthopedic surgery. His name was Dr. Albert Shine, who took one look at my-- actually, I went to another physician whom I knew from my hometown. His name was Dr. Frank Gruber.

Dr. Frank Gruber, may he rest in peace, was from my hometown, came from a poor family. The community bought him a scholarship to go to college. And what the scholarship consisted of is that he stayed in one place and he ate different meals every day in different people's houses. Dr. Frank Gruber graduated from there, went to France to go to medical school. And he was a student of Madame Curie.

Came back, established his office there, off the main square. And in his office, all people welcome, including poor people-- you know, peasants, when they come in from the country, stink. And nice patients don't like that. And he said that didn't make any differences. In his office, everybody was well-treated.

Eventually, when I went to New York, Dr. Frank Gruber was in New York. I went to him with my problem. My aunt took me to him to examine whether I was OK. He found a spot on my lung. You know, I had had tuberculosis. Apparently, that was arrested. And he also found this. And he said, I think this is called Friedberg's disease.

Well, anyhow, when I went to the specialist, Dr. Albert Shine, and he said, that's remarkable. Most internists don't even know the disease exists. But he called it correctly. And what happened was is when I was wearing wooden shoes, I developed a bone chip.

Well, actually, I knew something happened, because while I was at Dachau, I was in a hospital there. And they operated on it to remove a blood clot without anesthetic. So I knew something was there. Anyway, so he repaired it.

And when I went to Mount Sinai Hospital here, my aunt was with limited income, and three kids of her own, and she took me on. They said-- the social worker interviewed me very, very sensitively and told me that I would be a patient in the hospital. And they had wards. Well, they had mostly fairly-- it was an old-fashioned hospital. And if you look at the hospital, you'd think that they're ward patients.

But the people, the way they were treated, they were not like people think of as ward patients. Everybody-- the nursing staff and the medical staff-- were very good.

And I was there for about a week, because they kept having emergencies. And my operation was scheduled. And then an emergency would come. And they'd take the emergency first. And I had first-grade care. And they repaired it. And I did very well.

But it is the school that facilitated the whole process, because they knew all the social agencies that could take care of this. And I was not an exception. There were other kids who came from the slums. And they had this fund. And they didn't make any big deal out of it.

And the Mount Sinai Hospital was-- I happened to know about it because I have a distant relative who did a history of the hospital as part of a thesis in sociology. If you take a look at the American Nobel Prize winners, they were all invited to the staff seminars of Mount Sinai Hospital.

And Dr. BÃ©la Schick-- there's a test for scarlet fever which has been called the Schick test. Well, Dr. BÃ©la Schick practices at Mount Sinai Hospital. And they're very socially aware, very dedicated to their work. And they do first-rate science, in addition-- really, first-rate science. And there are hospitals that do some of those things, but very few who do

all three.

An inspiration.

Yeah, they were. So they were on the edge of Harlem then. They probably are in the middle of Harlem now. So they've had lots of poor patients and lots of-- and I can say that they certainly didn't discriminate or ever treat the, quote, "paying and non-paying" patients differently.

Well, maybe I'll start here to kind of introduce ourselves again and give the date, which is that I'm Sandra Bendayan, interviewing Paul Banko. This is tape number three. And did you introduce yourself, Ms. Serkin?

I'm Antonia Serkin.

OK.

Is this tape number three or tape number two?

It's tape number three, I do believe.

OK.

Yeah, three.

OK, great.

Some of the things you've been talking about may crop up again--

Yeah.

--if that's OK. Basically, in the chronology where we left off before was we we're going to start with you leaving Kaufbeuren. Let's start with that.

OK.

How did you come to Kaufbeuren?

Kaufbeuren was the worst camp I had ever been in. We got to Kaufbeuren in October, by late October. That was 800 people got there. By the end of December, there were only 200 left.

The guards were brutal. The work was terrible. And the camp commander was-- both the German SS camp commander and the prisoner camp commander was incredibly brutal German felon, who killed a lot of people arbitrarily. That's where I saw more Muselmans when I came than any others, any other camp that I've been in, including Auschwitz, and including Dachau.

Did you see people being what you would consider insane? Although maybe you could say being a Muselmann is a little bit in that category or maybe a lot in that category.

Being a Muselmann is more visible in action than in expression, in verbal expression. It is the appearance. They withdraw from life. They literally withdraw from life. And what-- perhaps it's the beginning of death in the camps. And that's how they appeared.

There was a tremendous amount of number of people killed for any excuse possible. One incident I remember is that Christmas Eve, they flooded the basement of a building. And this is a bitter cold of the Bavarian winter. They flooded the basement of a building and had us take a bath in the cold for Christmas. And that killed dozens and dozens of

people. They never got out of the cold water.

And they had the habit of dragging when there was a guy there who was a cantor who had been there when we got there. We used to sing for the guards. And I remember listening to him singing to the guards. And his voice got weaker and weaker. And then he became a Muselmann.

He went through the process?

Yeah. It was sort of a daily event. A lot of people got frostbite. A lot of people were frozen. A tremendous number of people were killed going or coming from the job, falling down. But the guards didn't shoot, they clubbed people to death.

There, it was the worst camp that I was in. And there was a doctor there, a prisoner doctor, who I don't know whether he was afraid or not, but doctors can issue a-- it's called a schonung, a slip to spare you, so to speak. So you get a day of work off. And I guess he must have been afraid for his own life, rather, then. We felt that he could have issued more slips, because every day that you didn't work, you saved a day for your life.

That was the worst camp, though. And then suddenly, they came and they closed the camp. And they shipped us off to Dachau. That was just after the new year. So we arrived in Dachau on January 10th. So it must have been January 8th, because this was a two-day journey, although it's not very far away. And that's when my father died. And I described that.

Yes.

He couldn't get up after the showers. And in Dachau, I was by myself. And in Dachau, we were placed in some barracks.

Do you remember the trip?

Oh, the trip was incredible. Most of the people couldn't stand anymore. But we were so thin that even though we were crowded, and we weren't as crowded as before, it didn't seem as crowded. We only had pajama tops and bottoms. And it was the Bavarian winter.

And some people managed to have some blankets. And then some people died. And then the ones who lived took the blankets from those who died. Most everybody was scared, because we all had diarrhea.

And I probably didn't tell you that if they detect you have diarrhea, the chances are pretty good that they'll kill you, because they think it's an irreversible process. And it's not always. Sometimes it is, but it's not always. So when we got to Dachau, we were all trying to conceal our diarrhea as much as possible.

How is that possible to do with this one pair of pajamas?

Well, that is you try to hold back until you get to a bathroom and to go to the bathroom when there is no guard there, or guard going by, or such. And the other thing is we dig out coals from the ashes, because we were under the impression that charcoal helps this process. Well, charcoal does, but not that kind of charcoal. But it had, probably, its effect in terms of a placebo effect.

But when we got to Dachau, we were mixed in with other prisoners. Now, when we saw-- not Germans, but that's when we met the Danes. And the Danish prisoners that I met in Dachau were wonderful. They were. And they shared their food. And they never shoved or stepped on anybody. Or no matter what, they just wouldn't be dehumanized.

Were any of these Danes Jewish?

Not that I know of. Not that I know of. If they were, they didn't identify them as such. But they were the most kind,

compassionate people. They even shared their tobacco. And you know, prisoners don't share tobacco, because tobacco was currency. But they shared that also.

What happened was is I did run into a German clergyman who had been there for many years. And I asked him to find out about my father, because he had been there so long, he knew people in the administration, and such. And he's the one who came back and told me that my father had died.

And so in Dachau, I got typhus. Typhus is not the same as typhoid fever. Typhus is a louse-borne disease. And then the organism is carried by a louse that's called a rickettsia. But eventually, typhus is both an intestinal and a systemic disease.

As a prisoner, what happens is that you pass out. You're in a coma for a while. And you become dehydrated. And if someone doesn't give you water, you die. So if you don't have friends who will give you preferably boiled water-- so my friends took my jacket, stood in line with my number, picked up my food. I couldn't chew, of course, when you're in a coma. But they gave me this food. And that's how I survived.

And ironically, later on, I got scabies, which is a minor skin infection. And when they discovered that I had scabies, then they put me in the hospital in Dachau. Lucky for me, in the ward that I was in, there was a French Moroccan soldier who's Black. And he could talk to me. The others didn't speak French. So we became friends.

And again, he literally saved my life because he helped me. I had diarrhea at the time. They discovered that you have diarrhea, you're dead in the hospital. So he essentially brought me gruel, and allowed me to go to the bathroom without telling the others, and even hid a night pot, a secret night pot.

He moved me-- there are three tiers of beds in the hospital. So he moved me in an upper back bed, where they never checked and they thought there was nobody there. And so I recovered there. And the scabies was just some ointment. And it was silly. But that certainly helped a lot.

And then I got back in the barracks. And by that time, it was end of March and beginning of April. And things were beginning. There were more bombing raids. There was an uneasy tension in the air.

We heard various rumors from places that the fronts were going every which way. Germany was caving in. And then end of April, they suddenly took us and put us on trains. And the trains were on the station at Dachau.

But these were not cattle cars. And this was the first time in all the time that I'd been in that we were in passenger cars-- in fact, upholstered. They weren't even old passenger cars. They were ordinary passenger cars.

And we couldn't believe this, because they would never let prisoners anywhere near it. Prisoners, quite frankly, stink, and they're dirty, and they don't have latrines, they have these huge buckets, which spill sewage all over and around. It's horrible conditions.

But they put us on this train. And then we were issued one blanket each. And we thought that something is very strange here, because we'd never gotten one blanket each, at least not in my experience-- maybe two to one blanket, but never one blanket each.

And then we were given 2/3 of a loaf of bread. And that's four times as much bread per person. 2/3 of a loaf of bread was-- I can't tell you what wealth it was. So we knew that they were trying to get rid of rations. They also gave us some canned food later on. That came later. It's true that when you open the cans, the meat was green. But we ate it just the same. And some of the bread was moldy. But we ate it.

So we knew things were strange. From this train, while we were sitting on the train, we saw a Red Cross. The train station itself is right across the street from the main entrance to the Dachau headquarters. We saw a Red Cross car pull up, go in. They were in there for a while. And then they drove off.

After the war, I met a Red Cross nurse who was in this camp in Garmisch-Partenkirchen who was in that ligation. What they were negotiating about was that they were going to let the-- they got an agreement from the Allies to let the SS come out unarmed. Their safe conduct would be guaranteed. They would go to a camp. But they would not be killed. And no one would shoot at them. And they refused it.

And so we found out later that the American forces that came from the other side who hit the camps first and then the headquarters, they saw what happened in the camp. By that time, the SS were coming out with their hands in high. And they mowed them down because they had seen what happened in the camps.

But anyhow, we were then sent to a little town called Seefeld in Bavaria. Seefeld is one of those picturesque towns in a little valley. And there's a river right next to Seefeld, not far from their downtown area then and that had a shallow bank of a river.

So up on the high side of the bank, they set up machine guns. And we were in the desolate part of the river bank. It was kind of rocky. And there's snow now all over Bavaria, even though it's the end of April.

They set up, as I said, these machine gun nests. And all of us were told to lie down there. And we were very apprehensive because we had so much. And then they set up in the machine gun nests. And they looked very businesslike. It was not a pro forma.

And sometimes, people set up machine guns, and they're just machine guns. But when they put the belt in and then they load the machine gun, you have to pull it back and load the machine gun, we knew that then, they're getting ready to shoot. It's not just there for show.

So we were told to lie down. And we lied down on this rough bank. And now, we each had an individual blanket. So we put two or three blankets below us to insulate us. And then we slept like spoons, you know, very tightly. And we had pulled blankets over our head. And we went to sleep.

And then we woke up early in the morning, because there was distant artillery fire. And the artillery fire was approaching. So you know, artillery shoots-- usually, they triangulate. They go one side, then the other. And then they hit the center.

And we knew that they were probing in this area. But that was on the other side of the mountain from us. So we'd hear some closer shots, and some distance shots, and some closer shots, and some distant shots. So we looked up. And I'm not sure what I told you. The guards were carrying these side packs, obviously, with civilian clothes peeking out of them.

Also, when they moved us through the town of Seefeld to the bank of the river, people were suddenly nice to us. Before that, if we were ever in town, people literally looked through you. They pretended you're not there. They pretended as if there was nothing on the street. And they brought out water. And they waved. And I don't remember them giving us food. But they were certainly very much friendlier than they had ever been.

And then I said, next morning, the guards had run away. So when I saw the guards had run away, I was with a bunch of guys from my hometown, whose names, unfortunately, I now don't remember-- six or seven of them. And I said, let's walk toward the gunfire, because that's where the Americans are. So we started walking on the highways.

And we would hear noises of trucks, or tractors, or of tanks, and then we would get off the main road, because one thing all Europeans know is the most dangerous armies are retreating armies. They're the ones who rape, and pillage, and murder. And they'll do anything. So we didn't want to be on the main road, hitting retreating German armies.

So in the hills in Bavaria, there are these little shacks, where sheep are taken in during snowstorms. So we would stay in these at night, and then again walk along the highway, And get off the highway if we heard any approaching tanks, or trucks, or such. Well, we were in one of these sheds when I looked out between the cracks and I saw a US tank go by. And I could recognize them, because they had a white star on it.

And I think I told you that during the war, we used to get not a German, but a Swiss magazine called Schweitzer Illustrierte, which was censored. And I discovered how, with isopropyl alcohol, you can remove the censoring ink.

And so we read about General Paulus, who surrendered at Stalingrad. See, in Germany, they said that he had committed suicide. Well, the films are still shown. I've seen it on KQED where he surrendered. So we knew what American tanks looked like from the pictures there, that they had a star on their side. And I knew the shape of American helmets and what they looked like.

And I've seen said pictures of GIs, everything. So when I saw the American helmet, then we went down on the highway. We started walking along the highway. And the highway was pretty well-littered, because American troops would open one package of K-rations, take out the crackers, and throw away the whole thing, or take out the cigarettes, and throw away the rest.

Well, the danger in this is that some of those rations are very rich. So at first, when we found the rations without any sign on it, I didn't want to pick them up, because I figured that the Germans were throwing out poisoned food. And they'd done all kinds of dirty tricks like that. But then we saw--

They had done that already, thrown out poisoned food?

No, the Germans, I felt they were capable of any deceptions, because they threw out, for example, toys that were bombs. And they did that in Poland. They were attractive little devices. And people would blow up.

You mean, anywhere, just on a city street, they would do this?

No, usually in the countryside, they would, in occupied countries. At least that's what I had heard, and that they were explosive devices that-- don't fool with something you don't know about. So as we were walking along here, we ran into an American detachment.

And I asked, you know, where-- is there a camp? Or what's going? He says, just keep on going. He says, we're not allowed to talk to you, to help you. We've got to move on. And they moved on down the line. And that's when I ran into an American-- a Black medical detachment. It was headed by a Black officer.

He stopped. And he started talking to us. I spoke English. And I translated for the rest. And he took out the K-rations, all of them, and lined them up, and told us what to eat and what not to eat.

K-rations have things like cheese and bacon. And it's wonderful for a soldier, because it's compact. And it's very high energy. And it's poison for us, because we hadn't had any frank fat of any kind in years, minimal margarine.

Why is it difficult to digest that in starvation?

The reason is that in starvation, the system digests itself. In starvation, the body shuts down the synthesis of many of-- not all, but many of the normal digestive functions in order to preserve those as an energy source. So what had previously been something to be used to enable you to digest the food is now itself burned to carbon dioxide and water. So you have less of the enzymes.

And when you eat less of the food, you make less of certain enzymes-- not all, but certain enzymes. So this is why the longer you're on a low diet, the lower your entire metabolic level is-- because this is a body's way of responding to lack of demand. You don't provide extra energy when there's no demand for it. And that's what starvation signals to the body.

So the enzymes, the fat, and the bile, frankly, which you also need, are at very low production levels. So eating high fat food means that you're going to lead to all kinds of difficulty.

You can't digest it. Then the bacteria take over. And that causes enormous infections in the body. And the immune

system is impaired, because you've been starved for so long. So a lot of prisoners died at the end of the war due to their overeating. But they weren't overeating in their terms, because they were just grabbing for food.

So there were these packages of dry cereal in this. There were compressed oat flakes that all you have to do is throw in hot water. And it became sort of a gruel. And there were crackers there. And he told us we could eat those, and some powdered milk, and dilute powdered eggs. There were some-- excuse me-- powdered eggs.

And he was absolutely wonderful. Then his men-- GIs get two blankets. You don't get infinite number of blankets. You get two blankets. And they gave one of their two blankets to us, wonderful wool blankets that saved our lives, absolutely. He didn't order them. He didn't ask them. The guys themselves went. And they each got a blanket, gave it to us.

And I talked to him. And I was walking bent over because I had severe pains on the side of my chest. And he listened to my chest and says, you have pneumonia. And so I asked him for Prontosil. Prontosil is the European name for sulfa drugs. And he knew what I was talking about immediately.

And he told them, he says, in America, we call them sulfa drugs. Here's some. And then he gave me instructions on how to take it, and drink water with it, and all the other things. And he was absolutely wonderful to us.

So when we parted, and I asked him, what's your name? Someday, I'm going to look you up, because I knew I wasn't going to stay in Europe. And his answer was by the time you come to America, you won't want to talk to me. And I didn't know what he meant. It's only later on that I learned what he meant. So to this day, I don't know who my benefactor was.

And we went. We were walking down the road here, and again, staying off the main roads. And then we hit a town called Mittenwald. Mittenwald is very famous. And they have famous violin-makers. And if you look in a German textbook, they always use Mittenwald as an illustration, because they have these frescoes on the outside of their houses.

We got to Mittenwald. And the people in Mittenwald didn't know what to do with us, because they were afraid that here come the prisoners from one side, here come the retreating German soldiers from the other side.

They were afraid that the prisoners would go on a rampage and tear the town apart, which was ridiculous, because one, look at these prisoners. They couldn't run. They could barely walk. But they did open up there, on the city gym.

How many were there of you at this point?

They were stragglers. They were mostly stragglers of prisoners. There were probably a couple of hundred. There were maybe 300 or 400 down at the bank of the river. But groups formed. And there were some prisoners who argued after the guards ran away. Some prisoners said, we shouldn't move. The guards just went away for breakfast. They're going to come back. And we shouldn't move or they'll shoot us.

And I said, the guards are gone. I'm gone. Some of them were afraid to lose the security. They'd been prisoners for so long that they were prisoners of themselves. And that does occur in prison. But I wanted to get out there the moment we could. And there were other kids we knew who stayed. So it wasn't only a young and old division.

Did it feel strange to make a decision to just get up and go?

Not to me. Not to me. No. I really didn't. I never seriously considered staying. And the kids that I was with-- but I was afraid that they would get hurt. And I felt overwhelmed with the responsibility of their safety.

They were all young people, your age?

Yeah. They all wanted to go home. And I was the only one didn't want to go home. I said, well, I want to find out about my mother. Then I found out about my mother, and no one was home. I was hoping that I'd find my mother in a camp,

but I wasn't going to go home.

When I was in my hometown, and people came to our house, and said, give me your furniture, and give me your books, you're not going to need them anymore, there was something in me that was cut.

And once in a while, I think of taking my kids back to show where I grew up. But I don't have that sense of going next door and talking to the people that I knew or that. That was erased.

First time I felt homesick is when I went in the army from Berkeley. I was riding an army bus across the Bay Bridge. And I said, gee, I miss Berkeley. But I didn't miss Cluj. I didn't. Or if I had an attachment, it was certainly severed.

I just wanted to ask you a couple of things. What was daily life like in Dachau? Did you work?

No. No, in Dachau, by the time I got there, we were in very crowded triple bunks, very, very tightly crowded. There was no work. There was just going in and out of the barracks. They'd march us in and out. But I never did a lick of work in Dachau. It was just a warehousing kind of situation.

I met the first 15-year-old Russian antisemites-- these were Russian partisans who had been picked up-- and also some Poles. And they cursed us in Russian, and Zhid was one of the terms that came out. And it wasn't a friendly gesture.

And I was amazed at that. To be in a concentration camp with Jews, in another concentration camp, and call you, I mean, some equivalent of a dirty Jew, I thought, oh, god, these Russians, after all this communism, they're no different than the rest.

They weren't?

Yeah. But there were a lot of nationalities. And there, they did distribute some packages. As I told you, the French and the Belgians got packages. And the conditions were very crowded. There was a lot of lice there and no disinfectant of any kind. In fact, there was more lice in Dachau than any camp I'd been in before at this stage, again.

Were there any incidences of view to that camp or along the way of sexual abuse, abuse of the inmates, or children?

Not where I was. I know of other people who were. There, they tend to pick a very youngish-looking boy for a laufer, a runner. But I wasn't attractive enough or I was maybe a little older. I was not among those chosen. I didn't see that. What I saw was an enormous amount of physical abuse.

And there were occasional times when some dreaded SS would give half an apple to a laufer or throw it out there. And the prisoners would get it. And there were occasional things like this. But I didn't see the kinds of thing.

Most of the things that I saw were people being beaten to a pulp, their arms deliberately broken, and they were deliberately gouged, and cheated in a way to deliberately cause pain and suffering.

And there are people who enjoy watching other people in pain. And there are some who are incited by the pleas of a prisoner because they consider that cowardice. And in their code of honor, cowardice can only be rewarded with death. And on the other hand, there are others who are excited by the silent prisoner because they want to get him to the point that the prisoner will plead for his life.

Is that something you could get a sensitivity to, as you said about murderous people?

Well, that's what told me that there are such things as murderous people. And there are people who are so remote from their fellow men that they are quite capable of committing murder and walking away from it. I don't know how this works long-term. I've heard stories of eventually, guards of some of the worst camps going nuts and so on.

And I don't know what happens afterwards. I suspect-- as I said, I don't know-- I suspect that they eventually carry

burdens because they carry a logical conflict if they grew up in any kind of civilization. But they also may have been so well prepared by the Nazis that once you dehumanize, you make this possible, you, at the same time, justify it. I don't know that.

It is, unfortunately, possible to train people for an awful lot of things, including this. And I suspect that they have some selection process. And I don't know whether it's self-selection or not.

But I think people preferred to believe that evil is something that is temporary, changeable, and not a human characteristic, but somehow, like a spirit that strikes someone occasionally and then moves on to some other territory. That I don't believe.

What do you believe?

I think there are such things as evil people. I think you have to recognize them. I think that we do have to take measures against them. I don't believe in capital punishment, but I do believe in incarceration without return.

And when people step beyond, when people enter into physical violence, I consider them permanently dangerous. When they transgress beyond a certain level of physical violence, I consider them permanently dangerous. And then you put them away. I think it'd be wonderful if we had some way of controlling this.

But in contemporary terms, I think that we are being denied an elementary human right of peace of mind when these people are not put away. And it is a very, very basic human right. I think women feel more at risk than men do.

But anybody who's been a prisoner feels very much at physical risk in certain situations, a little sooner than most other people do. And I've been in all kinds of places. I've been in Marseille, and I've been in the worst parts of New York, and I've never had any trouble. But my warning system is a little more sensitive than most people's also.

So I do look out. And I don't tempt fate, either. I don't walk perfectly secure. But there are places where I know I'm vulnerable and I don't go to without precaution. But I do think that, in terms of prison terms, once you transgress, then there is such a thing as losing your rights to inflict terror in others. And I'd unhesitatingly dismiss them from society.

In the case of the German guards in the camps, there certainly has been intimation that there was lots of alcohol, drugs, other things that--

I didn't see. Alcohol, yes. Yes, I've seen lots of alcohol, lots of alcohol, yes. But I didn't see drug use. But I was never intimately involved with the guards. I was never a laufer. I was never chosen for any special position. At the end of the war, I met an American couple. And that's how I came to this country.

And they kept telling me, sit down and write a book. And I said, it's a dull book, because there are a couple of million people who have the same story. I say, who's going to buy this? And I thought that no one would be interested in this story, because so many of us had gone through this. And there was nothing unusually remarkable about my experience or other experiences.

In fact, everyone does have their own experience and how they went through it.

Yeah. Yeah. You do. But I thought that we'd have, what, two million stories of human abuse. And I didn't write.

More than that. But you were talking before about the life in Dachau and no work. How did you spend the day?

Yeah. Just mulled around, waiting for the food to be served. And we'd talk about how soon the war would end. We knew things were up, because there was a difference in the behavior of the guards.

We noticed that the guards ate the same food we ate when we were in the last-- in Kaufbeuren. The guards and we got the same food, except they got more of the potatoes and more of the vegetables. And we got more of the soupy part of

that, the liquid part of the soup. But they were eating the same thing. So we knew that they were on very short rations.

What were your rations then?

Oh, the rations stayed pretty much the same. The quality of the bread changed. That was the only variable. In the morning, you got a-- we used to call it sock soup, because it's the same color as if you rinse dirty socks out. And some people called it coffee. And some people called it tea. And we said, you don't have to worry. You can name it anything you want. It tastes the same. That was humor.

And then they would serve dried veg. And it's called der Gem $\frac{1}{4}$ se. It's dried vegetable soup. It's either carrot or cabbage. And sometimes, you got lucky, it'd be potato soup. And once in a blue moon, there'd be microscopic amounts of cooked meat in it and a slice of bread-- not always, but a slice of bread.

Then at night, you'd get a slice of bread and a little bit of margarine about the size of margarine that's served here, you know, one of the little squares, about an inch and a quarter square, and about a half-inch thick. That was it-- or a piece of sausage that was a little thicker than that, about an inch and a half in diameter.

Well, the only fresh food we ever got were potatoes, which we dug out of the ground when we worked for a farmer. And he beat us because of that. And we ate those potatoes raw.

And that was it-- and a little bit of food from the Danish students when we were in Dachau, canned food of some kind. I don't know what it was. Maybe it was spam-like. But I'm not certain. I don't remember that.

I do remember him giving to us something like a cracker and a little tiny bit of chocolate from a chocolate bar, which was incredible. And we savored that chocolate. It's a good thing they didn't give us more, because we couldn't have handled more than a taste, either. But that was it.

And every noon, they'd be jockeying for position. First, you had to estimate what kind of-- the guy who distributes the food, is he a top dipper or bottom dipper? If he's a bottom dipper, then you can go early. You'll still get quite a bit.

But if you go just a little later, then you'll still get quite a bit of the bottom. But if he's a top dipper, then you go to the end of the line. And you stay out of the line as much as possible because you're going to get most of the food toward the end. So there were strategic plans of this kind.

What about toilet facilities in Dachau?

Oh, the toilets were long latrines. They're slabs of cement with a hole cut in. And you sort of squat on this. The toilet facilities were there. And the problem was to conceal whether you had diarrhea, because a kapo could go by. And then they start watching you and then picking you out if you had diarrhea. And we spent a lot of time--