

INTERVIEW WITH KAREL LANGER

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DATE: JUNE 20, 1991

PLACE: SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

INTERVIEWERS: JUDITH BACKOVER

RICHARD KIRSCHMAN

DORIS OBER

TRANSCRIBER: SHARON R. MCDANIEL

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MS. BACKOVER: TODAY'S THURSDAY, JUNE 20TH, 1991.
I'M JUDITH BACKOVER WITH THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY
PROJECT INTERVIEWING KAREL LANGER AT CONGREGATION BETH
SHALOM IN SAN FRANCISCO. WITH US TODAY ARE RICHARD
KIRSCHMAN AND DORIS OBER.

Q. GOOD MORNING, KAREL. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE
YOU BACK TO YOUR CHILDHOOD, IF I MAY, IN MORAVIA AND ASK
YOU TO TELL ME, FIRST OF ALL, WHAT KIND OF A CHILD WERE
YOU?

A. A GOOD CHILD. YES, I WAS. THAT'S WHAT MY
MOTHER TOLD ME. I WASN'T A TROUBLEMAKER UNTIL I START
GOING TO SCHOOL. THEN I WAS A LITTLE BAD. BUT I WAS A
PRETTY GOOD CHILD, I THINK.

1
2 Q. HOW DID THAT MANIFEST ITSELF IN YOUR
3 RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR FAMILY AND WITH PEOPLE IN YOUR
4 TOWN? WHAT WAS YOUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIP LIKE?

5 A. WELL, I WISH YOU WOULD SORT OF ELABORATE ON
6 THE QUESTION. RELATIONSHIPS IS A VERY WIDE CONCEPT.
7 I -- YOU MEAN AT THE TIME, AT WHAT AGE, AND WHEN? I
8 MEAN WHEN I WAS FIVE, SIX OR SEVEN?

9 Q. YOU CAN START AS EARLY AS YOU LIKE AND TALK
10 ABOUT THE PROGRESSION.

11 A. WELL, THE TOWN I COME FROM IS -- ACTUALLY
12 WAS A VERY SMALL TOWN; WAS 7,000 INHABITANTS. AND I
13 DON'T HAVE -- JUST GLIMPSES; I DON'T HAVE A VERY GOOD
14 RECOLLECTION OF WHAT WAS GOING ON. BUT MY FATHER WAS IN
15 THE LUMBER BUSINESS AND WE HAD DOGS AND HE WAS A HUNTER,
16 AND IT WAS SORT OF AN OUTDOOR-TYPE LIFE, WHICH I
17 ENJOYED, AND WHICH I SORT OF ENJOY UNTIL TODAY. I LIKE
18 TO GO INTO THE WOODS AND I HAVE HUNTING DOGS MYSELF.

19 AND I WAS NOT A VERY GOOD STUDENT, AS I
20 MENTIONED ON THE EARLIER TAPE. I WASN'T -- YOU ASKED ME
21 WHAT KIND OF A CHILD I WAS. I WAS NOT A TROUBLEMAKER OR
22 ANYTHING LIKE THAT.

23 I WAS A LITTLE BIT OF A MAMA'S BOY. MAYBE
24 IF I COULD CHANGE ANYTHING, GOING BACK, THAT'S SOMETHING
25 I WOULD HAVE CHANGED. AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN TELL

LANGER-3

1
2 YOU ON THAT. I MEAN IT'S SOMETHING THAT I HAVE NOT, YOU
3 KNOW, CROSSED MY MIND, SO I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE A PAUSE
4 ON CAMERA AND LET ME THINK AND THINK A LOT ABOUT THAT.

5 MAYBE AS WE GO ALONG, MAYBE IT WILL -- A
6 PICTURE WILL COME UP IN MY HEAD OF HOW I WAS OR WHAT I
7 USED TO DO. AS I SAID, MY FATHER WAS IN THE LUMBER
8 BUSINESS AND IT -- HIS LUMBERYARD WAS RIGHT ACROSS FROM
9 OUR HOUSE. AND I USED TO PLAY AND BUILD FORTS, AND IT
10 WAS A SORT OF A CAREFREE LIFE EVEN FOR A CHILD.

11 COMPARING TO, YOU KNOW, MY CHILDREN AND I
12 ABOUT THE AGE WHAT I WAS THEN, AND IT IS JUST LIKE
13 CENTURIES WOULD SEPARATE THE TYPE OF LIFE WE LED AND THE
14 CHILDREN -- THE TYPE OF LIFE THE CHILDREN LEAD TODAY
15 HERE IN THIS COUNTRY, AT LEAST IN THIS AREA.

16 Q. HOW EXACTLY? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, THAT
17 YOUR LIFE WAS VERY CAREFREE, AND WHEN DID IT START TO
18 CHANGE?

19 A. WELL, OBVIOUSLY IT STARTED TO CHANGE AFTER
20 1939 WHEN THE GERMANS MARCHED INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA. EVEN
21 THEN, YOU KNOW, AS I HAVE MENTIONED -- I WATCHED THE
22 TAPE -- THAT BECAUSE OF MY YOUNG AGE, I DIDN'T
23 UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.

24 BUT I, YOU KNOW, I SAW AROUND ME, YOU KNOW,
25 MY FATHER LOSE HIS BUSINESS. WE WERE EVICTED FROM OUR

LANGER-4

1
2 HOUSE; HAD TO MOVE SOMEWHERE ELSE; THE PRESENCE OF
3 GESTAPO AND THE HARASSMENT. SO I UNDERSTOOD IT BUT I
4 STILL WAS A CHILD AND I CERTAINLY DIDN'T PERCEIVE IT THE
5 SAME AS THE ADULTS DID. SO THAT'S WHEN IT CHANGED,
6 1939. I WAS TEN THEN.

7 Q. WHAT DID THE ADULTS TELL YOU ABOUT IT OR
8 WHAT DID YOU OVERHEAR THEM TALKING ABOUT?

9 A. YOU'RE VERY DEMANDING. IT'S NOTHING THAT
10 THEY SAID. ALL I CAN THINK OF -- OR WHAT I SAW, I DON'T
11 REMEMBER ANYTHING THAT HAS BEEN SAID. I CAN'T REALLY
12 RESPOND TO YOUR QUESTION.

13 Q. DID YOU ASK QUESTIONS? DO YOU REMEMBER
14 HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH EITHER YOUR MOTHER OR YOUR
15 FATHER, SAY, EVEN ON THE LEVEL OF, "WHY DO WE HAVE TO
16 MOVE NOW"?

17 A. WELL, NO, I -- WELL, ACTUALLY I KNEW IT.
18 AND I DON'T THINK THAT CHILDREN, AT LEAST MYSELF AT THE
19 TIME, WERE AS MATURE AS CHILDREN ARE TODAY, YOU KNOW. I
20 MIGHT HAVE SOUNDED CRITICAL THE WAY CHILDREN ARE TODAY,
21 BUT CHILDREN ARE MUCH MORE -- YOU KNOW, WE LIVE IN A
22 DIFFERENT AGE. THEY KNOW MORE.

23 AND PERHAPS MY DAUGHTER WOULD ASK
24 QUESTIONS, WHICH SHE DOES. I HAVE A TEN-YEAR-OLD
25 DAUGHTER. AND I DIDN'T THEN. IT WAS JUST -- AT LEAST I

LANGER-5

1
2 DON'T REMEMBER ASKING ANY QUESTIONS. I KNEW WE HAD TO
3 MOVE AND I JUST DIDN'T ASK. MAYBE IN MY OWN WAY I
4 UNDERSTOOD WHY.

5 Q. WERE THERE OTHER THINGS THAT YOU CAME TO
6 UNDERSTAND JUST BY WATCHING THAT WERE DIFFERENT? YOU
7 MENTIONED THE PRESENCE OF THE GESTAPO AND YOU USED THE
8 WORD "HARASSMENT." WHAT DID YOU SEE OR WHAT DID YOU
9 FEEL THAT YOU --

10 A. YOU MEAN WHAT I ACTUALLY SEE? WELL, WE HAD
11 TO -- WHEN WE WERE EVICTED FROM OUR HOUSE AND WE MOVED
12 INTO A BUILDING, THE PICTURE THAT I BROUGHT THAT I HAVE
13 HERE, WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO GO OUT PAST 8:00 P.M. AND
14 EVEN THEN SOMETIMES THE GESTAPO WAS WALKING AROUND THE
15 STREETS. AND IF THEY SAW ANYBODY JUST STANDING IN THE
16 DOOR, THEY ARRESTED THEM. AND IT WAS A SMALL TOWN, VERY
17 SMALL COMMUNITY. YOU KNEW WHO WAS ARRESTED. AND SOME
18 OF THE PEOPLE WERE EVEN EXECUTED FOR THAT.

19 I JUST CAME BACK FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA, FROM
20 MY HOMETOWN, JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO, AND I WENT TO THE
21 OLD -- WELL, ACTUALLY IT'S THE JEWISH CEMETERY. IT'S
22 STILL THERE, AND THERE IS A PLAQUE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE
23 TOWN THAT WERE JUST GASSED AND DIED AND THOSE PEOPLE WHO
24 WERE EXECUTED.

25 AND I JUST -- THIS TIME I WAS BY MYSELF,

LANGER-6

1
2 WITHOUT MY FAMILY, SO I HAD SORT OF -- WAS ABLE TO MORE
3 FOCUS ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING. BECAUSE AS I HAVE SAID IN
4 MY PREVIOUS INTERVIEW, I HAVE REALLY NOT DWELLED
5 TERRIBLY MUCH ON MY WARTIME EXPERIENCES.

6 I HAVE FRIENDS WHO DO THAT, PEOPLE THAT
7 WERE WITH ME IN THE CAMP. IN FACT, I EVEN MET SOME
8 PEOPLE NOW THAT WERE WITH ME IN THERESIEN DURING THE
9 WAR. I MADE A POINT TO VISIT SOME OF THE PEOPLE THAT I
10 HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE 1943. AND THAT WAS SORT OF EXCITING.

11 BUT THEN AGAIN WE TALKED OF THE PRESENT AND
12 WE TALKED OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA RATHER
13 THAN WHAT WE HAVE LIVED THROUGH AT THE TIME, WHICH I WAS
14 THEN 14. YOU KNOW, THEY WERE 14, 15. AND NOT EVEN THEM
15 ARE DWELLING VERY MUCH ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

16 I KNOW I'M DIGRESSING A LITTLE BIT FROM
17 YOUR QUESTION, BUT IT'S VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME BECAUSE I
18 DID NOT -- YOU KNOW, I DID NOT, AS I SAID, DWELL ON IT
19 TERRIBLY MUCH.

20 YOU KNOW, I HAVE A NUMBER AND I HAVE FROZEN
21 FEET THAT'S WITH ME ALL THE TIME. BUT I -- YOU KNOW, I
22 DIDN'T READ TERRIBLY MUCH ABOUT IT. I MEAN I DO
23 OCCASIONALLY WATCH SOME OF THOSE FILMS THAT YOU SEE ON
24 THE P.B.S. AND MAYBE I JUST SORT OF WATCH IT IN ORDER
25 NOT TO FORGET. BUT IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT I

LANGER-7

1
2 CONSCIOUSLY NOT THINK ABOUT. IT IS JUST -- I DON'T
3 KNOW.

4 I CAN'T -- YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T COME UP WITH
5 IT, WHY I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT MORE. AS I SAID, I HAVE
6 ONE PARTICULAR FRIEND WHO LIVES IN JERUSALEM WHO IS
7 PREOCCUPIED WITH THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS. I REMEMBER I
8 CAME TO VISIT HIM AND, YOU KNOW, HE WAS -- HE ALREADY
9 HAD SIX OR EIGHT BOOKS ABOUT THERESIEN, ABOUT OTHER
10 CAMPS ON THE SOVANNA. I WASN'T INTERESTED IN IT; NOT
11 BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT OR ANYTHING LIKE
12 THAT OR THAT I'M ASHAMED OR THAT I HIDE IT. I DON'T.

13 Q. WHEN YOU DO TALK ABOUT IT, FOR INSTANCE,
14 WHEN YOU WERE BACK JUST RECENTLY AND YOU MET SOME OF
15 YOUR OLD FRIENDS, WHAT COMES UP? WHAT DO YOU TALK
16 ABOUT?

17 A. WELL, THE TOWN THAT I COME FROM HAD A VERY
18 LARGE JEWISH POPULATION. AND IT'S INTERESTING. A LOT
19 OF THE PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, MOST PEOPLE DIDN'T SURVIVE THE
20 WAR, BUT SOME OF THEM HAVE. AND WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
21 TWO FAMILIES, THEY ALL -- THEY'RE ALL GONE. THERE WAS
22 PROBABLY MAYBE EIGHT OR NINE HUNDRED PEOPLE THAT LIVED
23 IN A TOWN OF 7,000, WHICH IS A LARGE PERCENTAGE. AND A
24 LOT OF THEM COME BACK AND VISIT IT.

25 AND I HAVE MET SOME OTHER THAN JUST MY

LANGER-8

1
2 PEOPLE THAT I WAS TOGETHER IN THERESIEN, BUT PEOPLE THAT
3 COME FROM THE TOWN THAT I -- THAT CAME BACK WHILE I WAS
4 THERE, JUST LIKED TO VISIT IT. IT'S JUST PEOPLE LIKE TO
5 GO BACK TO THEIR ROOTS, I SUPPOSE.

6 AND IT'S INTERESTING, WHAT PEOPLE TALK
7 ABOUT IS WHO HAVE SURVIVED AND, YOU KNOW, SOME PEOPLE --
8 WE TALKED ABOUT PEOPLE THAT ARE NO LONGER ALIVE. WE
9 SAY, WELL, HAVE THESE PEOPLE SURVIVED THE WAR AND THOSE
10 PEOPLE SURVIVED THE WAR?

11 AND WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE TIMES, HOW IT
12 WAS DURING THE WAR. ONE OF THE PEOPLE THAT -- A WIFE OF
13 THIS GOOD FRIEND OF MINE THAT I STAYED WITH, HER MOTHER
14 WAS EXECUTED. I MEAN I DID NOT KNOW THAT. I MEAN MAYBE
15 I DID BUT I JUST -- AND WE TALKED ABOUT THAT. BUT WE
16 JUST TALKED ABOUT THE OLD TIMES AND MOSTLY THE PEOPLE
17 WHO ARE -- THEY ARE MOSTLY DEAD NOW.

18 BUT YOU MUSTN'T FORGET THAT I AM PERHAPS
19 THE YOUNGEST PERSON FROM MY HOMETOWN FROM THE JEWISH
20 PEOPLE THAT SURVIVED, SO I WAS ONLY 14 WHEN I CAME BACK.
21 SO THOUGH I HAVE A VERY GOOD MEMORY, I MEAN I DO NOT
22 REMEMBER A LOT OF THINGS, YOU KNOW. THERE IS A
23 DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU ARE 14 OR 16. I DID NOT REMEMBER A
24 LOT OF THESE PEOPLE, OR JUST VAGUELY.

25 ANYHOW, THIS IS WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT,

LANGER-9

1
2 IS JUST HOW IT WAS DURING THE WAR AND HOW IT IS NOW.

3 Q. WHAT KIND OF WORDS COME UP? DESCRIBE WHAT
4 KIND OF WORDS.

5 A. YOU ARE VERY DEMANDING. WHAT KIND OF WORDS
6 COME UP? WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TELL YOU WORDS,
7 BUT I -- THE MOOD IS NOT SOMBER. IS THAT THE WORD,
8 SOMBER? YOU KNOW, WE'RE NOT SAD OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
9 WE'RE JUST -- WE ALL KNOW WE LIVED THROUGH IT, AND SOME
10 EXPERIENCES WERE WORSE THAN OTHERS.

11 AND WELL, FOR EXAMPLE, I HAVE ALSO ONE OF
12 THE MEN THAT COMES FROM MY TOWN THAT LIVES IN MUNICH.
13 HE WAS TELLING ME A STORY HOW THAT HE WAS ARRESTED
14 DURING THE WAR THAT I DID NOT KNOW ABOUT. OF COURSE, HE
15 IS ABOUT PROBABLY EIGHT OR NINE, TEN YEARS OLDER THAN
16 MYSELF SO, YOU KNOW, HE WAS IN HIS TWENTIES WHEN THIS
17 WAS ALL HAPPENING.

18 HOW HE WAS ARRESTED AND HOW -- AND WHY HE
19 WAS ARRESTED, HE WAS OUT IN THE STREET AFTER EIGHT
20 O'CLOCK. AND HE WAS SENTENCED JUST -- HE DIDN'T GO TO
21 THE GESTAPO; IT WAS JUST BY THE CZECH POLICE WHO WERE
22 COLLABORATING WITH THE GERMANS. AND HE GOT, I DON'T
23 KNOW, TEN DAYS.

24 AND HE WAS TELLING ME ABOUT A STORY HOW HE
25 WAS IN THE JAIL WITH A MAN WHO WAS -- WITH A MURDERER

LANGER-10

1
2 WHO MURDERED A MAN WHO, BECAUSE HE WAS GOING AFTER HIS
3 GIRLFRIEND, AND THE MAN SURVIVED THE WAR, THAT MURDERER.
4 AND HE MET HIM AFTER THE WAR, AND DURING THE COMMUNIST
5 REGIME HE WAS SOME BIGSHOT AND HE WENT TO VISIT HIM AND
6 SO -- AND IT WAS ALSO ALMOST, YOU KNOW, IN FUN TALKING
7 ABOUT IT, HOW HE WAS IN JAIL DURING THE WAR. IT WAS
8 AMAZING, YOU KNOW, THAT HE COULD TALK ABOUT IT WITH
9 CERTAIN JOVIALITY.

10 HE WAS ALSO TELLING ME THAT THE JUDGE WHO
11 SENTENCED HIM, THAT HE WAS CAUGHT AFTER THE WAR, AND HE
12 ACTUALLY CAUGHT HIM AND THAT THEY ACTUALLY BEAT HIM UP
13 ONE DAY AFTER THE WAR. YOU KNOW, HE WAS CAPTURED. HE
14 WAS A CZECH; HE WAS NOT A GERMAN. AND THAT THEY BEAT
15 HIM UP AND -- BUT THESE SORT OF THINGS WE TALKED ABOUT.

16 I MEAN, AGAIN I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT WE
17 DID NOT DWELL ON IT, BUT IT HAS COME UP MORE OFTEN THAN
18 IT DOES IN MY LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES.

19 Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY STORIES OF THAT NATURE OF
20 YOUR OWN TO ADD TO THE CONVERSATION?

21 A. I'M A GOOD LISTENER. NO, NO. AND I GUESS
22 PERHAPS, YOU KNOW, I KEEP ON COMING BACK TO THAT; THAT,
23 YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T RETAIN STORIES. I MEAN I HAVE SOME
24 STORIES. SOME OF THEM I HAVE PROBABLY MENTIONED AT THE
25 EARLIER INTERVIEW.

LANGER-11

1
2 BUT I WAS -- NO, I DIDN'T. I JUST -- I
3 CERTAINLY PARTICIPATED IN A CONVERSATION AND INQUIRED
4 ABOUT PEOPLE AND, YOU KNOW, WAS CURIOUS MYSELF WHO HAS
5 SURVIVED AND WHO HASN'T.

6 I KNEW MOST OF THE PEOPLE THAT WERE ALIVE,
7 BUT THERE WERE NAMES THAT CAME UP THAT I DIDN'T EVEN
8 REMEMBER ANYMORE BECAUSE I WAS YOUNG AND I JUST HAD, YOU
9 KNOW, JUST NOTHING TO DO WITH THOSE PEOPLE. I HAD A
10 GROUP OF FRIENDS AND NONE OF MY FRIENDS THAT I HAD
11 DURING THE WAR SURVIVED.

12 AS I SAID, I WAS THE YOUNGEST. AND THERE
13 WERE A FEW GIRLS WHO WERE A COUPLE, THREE YEARS OLDER
14 THAN MYSELF THAT SURVIVED, BUT NO BOYS.

15 CAN I TAKE A SIP OF WATER?

16 I HAVE A -- I HAVE QUESTIONED IT MANY
17 TIMES, YOU KNOW, "WHY ME? WHY NOT THE OTHERS?" AND THE
18 EXISTENCE OF GOD CAME INTO PLAY AND -- BUT I GUESS
19 YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED IN THAT. I ASKED FOR IT, DIDN'T
20 I?

21 Q. YES.

22 A. WELL, I MEAN NOTHING PROFOUND; JUST THE
23 QUESTION OF RELIGION AND JUDAISM AND OTHER. I DON'T
24 HAVE A RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING TO START WITH, AND
25 WHATEVER -- YOU KNOW, I DON'T PREOCCUPY MYSELF WITH

LANGER-12

1 JEWISH RELIGION. IN FACT, I ALMOST REJECT IT. AND I
2 DON'T REJECT MY JEWISHNESS, BUT CERTAINLY RELIGION. AND
3 IT GOES BACK THROUGH MY -- TO MY WAR EXPERIENCES, I'M
4 SURE.
5

6 Q. CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THAT? WHAT DOES IT
7 MEAN TO YOU NOW TO CALL YOURSELF A JEW AND WHAT DID IT
8 MEAN THEN, THEN IN YOUR SMALL TOWN AND WHEN YOU WERE IN
9 THE CAMP?

10 A. WHAT IT WAS THEN? IT WAS NOTHING. I MEAN,
11 YOU KNOW, JUST I WAS WHO I WAS AND -- JUST NOTHING.
12 WHAT IT WAS IN THE WAR, IT WAS -- IN THE WAR IT WAS,
13 WELL, I WAS IN THE CAMP BECAUSE I WAS JEWISH. AND I
14 DON'T THINK THAT I HAVE EVER -- AT LEAST THAT I
15 REMEMBER -- SAYING, "I WISH I WEREN'T JEWISH BECAUSE I
16 WOULDN'T BE HERE." I DON'T THINK THAT EVER CROSSED MY
17 MIND.

18 HOWEVER, TODAY RELIGION, SOMETIMES WHEN
19 I -- IT ANNOYS ME, ACTUALLY. IT ANNOYS ME BECAUSE I
20 THINK IT CONSTRICTS YOUR FREEDOM. I LIVED IN ISRAEL,
21 AND WHEN I SEE THE HASSIDIM, THEY REALLY ANNOY ME. THEY
22 ANNOY ME. ACTUALLY, I DISLIKE THEM IMMENSELY BECAUSE
23 THEY'RE NOT ENLIGHTENED PEOPLE. AND I'M ALMOST
24 EMBARRASSED WHEN I SEE A JEW WALK BY WITH PEYES
25 (INDICATING). I DON'T KNOW WHY I SHOULD BE, BUT I AM,

LANGER-13

1 BECAUSE I THINK THEY'RE EMBARRASSING.

2 I WAS IN NEW YORK A FEW WEEKS -- A FEW
3 MONTHS AGO AND YOU SEE A LOT OF THEM THERE. I WAS JUST
4 SHAKING MY HEAD. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. BECAUSE WHERE
5 I COME FROM, WE DON'T -- YOU KNOW, WE DON'T --
6 CZECHOSLOVAKIA WHERE I WAS, WE DON'T HAVE THIS HASSIDIC
7 ENVIRONMENT TO THE DEGREE THAT IT WAS IN POLAND AND
8 LITHUANIA AND RUSSIA. BUT IT'S NOT ME. IT'S NOT ME.

9 Q. BUT WHAT IS YOUR SENSE OF JEWISHNESS?

10 A. IT'S A FEELING. IT'S A SOUL. IT'S A SOUL.
11 IT'S A FEELING. IT'S JUST -- IT'S SOMETHING INSIDE THAT
12 I CAN'T -- A SOUL WOULD BE THE BEST DESCRIPTION I WOULD
13 GIVE IT. AND IT -- NOTHING TO DO WITH RELIGION AT ALL;
14 ABSOLUTELY NONE.

15 AND ALL THESE PEOPLE THAT I MET ARE EXACTLY
16 LIKE I AM. I MEAN THEY -- I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU WHAT
17 OUR FAVORITE FOOD IS. IT'S HAZER; FAVORITE FOOD, AND
18 WE'RE ALL JEWISH. I MEAN WE'RE ALL JEWISH AND WE ARE
19 JUST AS GOOD A PEOPLE AS PEOPLE WHO WALK WITH THE PEYES;
20 MAYBE BETTER. SO IT'S NOT RELIGION. IT'S JUST YOUR
21 HEART.

22 Q. TO A BOY OF 12, 13, 14 IN A CONCENTRATION
23 CAMP WHO KNEW HE WAS THERE BECAUSE HE WAS JEWISH, WHAT
24 ELSE DID THE RELIGION MEAN BESIDES YOUR TICKET TO
25

LANGER-14

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PRISON?

A. BUT, YOU SEE, I NEVER -- AS MUCH AS I CAN REMEMBER, I NEVER PERCEIVED BEING JEWISH AS RELIGION. I MEAN IT WAS, YOU KNOW, NOT RELIGION. AS I SAID, I DO NOT COME FROM A RELIGIOUS HOME AT ALL. I MEAN MY -- I HAVE GONE TO TEMPLE WITH MY GRANDPARENTS. EVEN GOING TO TEMPLE, YOU DON'T GO TO TEMPLE BECAUSE YOU ARE RELIGIOUS. IT'S JUST A HABIT MORE FOR SOME PEOPLE.

BUT WE DIDN'T EVEN DO THAT, SO I CAN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE IT WASN'T BEING OF A JEWISH RELIGION. IT'S JUST BEING JEWISH, WHICH IS, I THINK, SOMETHING DIFFERENT. AND WHAT DIFFERENT, I'D HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT. I COULDN'T TELL YOU JUST RIGHT ON THE SPOT HERE.

WELL, I DON'T KNOW, IT'S NOTHING MYSTERIOUS. YOU GO TO ISRAEL. ISRAEL IS A JEWISH STATE BUT IT CERTAINLY IS NOT A RELIGIOUS STATE, DESPITE THE FACT OF THE HAVOC THAT THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE PLAY THERE, AND I EXPERIENCED IT MYSELF.

BUT I DON'T THINK WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT JEWISH RELIGION HERE. I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

Q. I WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE YOUR SENSE OF JEWISHNESS --

A. WELL --

LANGER-15

Q. -- AS WHEN YOU WERE IN THE CAMPS. WELL, YOU KNOW, ON A SUPERFICIAL LEVEL WHAT DID YOU SEE AROUND YOU?

A. WHAT I DON'T LIKE, AND I KNOW IF I'M GOING TO WATCH THIS TAPE AFTER THIS WITH MY WIFE, THERE'S A CERTAIN HOSTILITY THAT COMES OUT, AND I CAN FEEL IT. AND IT IS BECAUSE MAYBE A CERTAIN -- HOSTILITY AND ANGER.

AND WHAT I HAVE ON MY MIND IS JUST WHEN I LIVED IN ISRAEL RIGHT AFTER THE WAR AND SEE THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE, WHAT THEY DID TO US WHICH CURTAILED OUR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, YOU KNOW, ON SATURDAYS. SO THAT'S WHERE THE ANGER COMES IN. AND THE FACT THAT I SERVED IN ISRAELI ARMY AND THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE DID NOT BECAUSE THEY WERE EXEMPT.

AND ONE OF THE PEOPLE THAT I MET IN EUROPE, WE TALKED ABOUT THE SAME SUBJECT. SHE IS A COMMON-LAW WIFE OF A FRIEND OF MINE WHO WAS WITH ME IN THERESIEN, IN THE SAME ROOM. SHE'S FROM ROMANIA.

AND WE -- YOU KNOW, I ASKED THEM HOW DO THEY -- YOU KNOW, HOW IT IS BEING JEWISH LIVING IN GERMANY? THEY LIVE IN FRANKFURT, BY THE WAY. AND SHE LIVED IN A KIBBUTZ AND HER -- SHE WAS MARRIED WITH TWO CHILDREN AND HER HUSBAND JUST DID NOT WANT TO STAY IN

LANGER-16

1
2 ISRAEL ANYMORE; FOR WHATEVER REASONS, I DON'T KNOW.

3 WHEN THEY MOVED TO FRANKFURT, HE PASSED
4 AWAY. AND TO MAKE THE LONG STORY SHORT, SHE MET THIS
5 FRIEND OF MINE AND THEY ARE TOGETHER. HER CHILDREN ARE
6 GROWN. ONE IS A PHYSICIAN AND MARRIED TO A NON-JEWISH
7 PERSON.

8 AND, IN FACT, WHEN IT CAME TO WHAT IT WAS
9 LIKE IN ISRAEL, SHE SAID, "WELL, YOU SAID THERE IS NO
10 RELIGIOUS MOTHER THAT HAS TO CRY FOR HER SON THAT HAS
11 FALLEN IN ISRAEL BECAUSE THEY DON'T GO TO THE ARMY. SHE
12 DOESN'T HAVE TO CRY FOR HER SON OR BROTHER OR HUSBAND
13 BECAUSE THE ORTHODOX PEOPLE ARE EXEMPT FROM THE ARMY."
14 SO THIS IS WHERE THE HOSTILITY AND ANGER COMES IN. SO
15 I -- THIS IS WHY I WANT TO SORT OF -- I CAN FEEL THE
16 ANGER IN MYSELF.

17 I MENTIONED JUST TO RICHARD JUST WHEN I
18 CAME ABOUT TALKING ABOUT THE JEWISH BULLETIN. I MEAN
19 I'M GETTING IT -- I'M GOING TO STOP. I'M GETTING IT --
20 I'M GOING TO STOP IT BECAUSE EVERY SECOND PICTURE IS A
21 RABBI, AND THOSE PEOPLE ANNOY ME.

22 NOW I THINK I WOULD LIKE TO STOP ON THAT
23 SUBJECT. I THINK YOU HAVE MY FEELING. AND I USUALLY
24 DON'T HIDE MY FEELINGS; NOT GOOD AT THAT. I TOLD YOU
25 I'M NOT A VERY GOOD ACTOR.

LANGER-17

1 Q. OKAY. TO GO BACK FOR A MOMENT AND GO TO
2 THERESIEN, AND YOU WERE 14 --

3 A. WELL, I WAS IN THERESIEN IN 1943. SO I WAS
4 PROBABLY 14. I WAS BORN IN 1929; IS THAT CORRECT?
5 YEAH, 14; NOT QUITE, 13, 14. PROBABLY 14, YEAH.

6 Q. WHAT DO YOU SEE THERE OR WHAT IS IT LIKE
7 FOR YOU? DESCRIBE YOUR SURROUNDINGS.

8 A. I LIVED IN A -- WHAT USED TO BE A SCHOOL.
9 IN FACT, THAT BUILDING IS GOING TO BE MADE INTO A MUSEUM
10 NOW.

11 DURING THE COMMUNIST -- IF I MIGHT TELL YOU
12 BEFORE I ANSWER YOUR QUESTION -- THE COMMUNISTS, THE
13 CZECHOSLOVAK COMMUNIST REGIME HAS SORT OF SUPRESSED THE
14 SUFFERING OF THE JEWS. THEY NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT.

15 AND WHEN I WAS THERE TWO YEARS AGO, I TOOK
16 MY FAMILY. NOW, WE DID GO TO THERESIEN. AND I WENT TO
17 THAT SCHOOL, AND I HAVE MENTIONED TO SOMEBODY THAT I
18 LIVED THERE DURING THE WAR, SO IMMEDIATELY THEY CALLED
19 SOMEBODY.

20 AND I MET SOMEBODY WHO WAS A DOCENT. THEY
21 BROUGHT IN A DOCENT. I TOLD HER -- AND I SPEAK CZECH
22 FLUENTLY -- AND I SAID, "LISTEN, HOW COME YOU OR THE
23 GOVERNMENT HAVE NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED THE SUFFERING OF THE
24 JEWS? EVERYTHING ELSE IS HERE BUT NOT THAT." AND SHE
25

LANGER-18

TOLD ME THAT IT HAS PROBABLY SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE ATTITUDE OF THE SOVIET OR COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS TOWARDS ISRAEL. SO THAT WAS SUPRESSED.

HOWEVER, THAT BUILDING WAS MADE INTO A MUSEUM OF THE CZECH POLICE OR SOMETHING. AND I WAS JUST FLABBERGASTED WHEN I SAW THAT. I WAS ANNOYED, BUT I SORT OF TRIED TO COOL IT BECAUSE I WAS IN A COMMUNIST REGIME AND I WANTED TO GET OUT AGAIN.

THAT'S ALL GONE NOW AND THEY HAVE MADE IT -- THEY'RE GOING TO MAKE IT INTO A MUSEUM AND THE PRESENT CZECHSLOVAK GOVERNMENT PROBABLY TRY TO CORRECT SOME OF THE WRONGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED DURING THE COMMUNIST TIME, WHICH IS '48 TO '89.

AND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN CHARGE ARE CZECH JEWS, SO THAT'S GOING TO BE HOPEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED THEN SO THE OTHER PEOPLE KNOW TO PREVENT IT HAPPENING IN THE FUTURE. I MEAN SO THE YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. APPARENTLY THEY WERE SHOWING SOME FILMS OR CZECH TELEVISION WHAT HAS HAPPENED DURING THE WAR.

WHAT WAS MY FEELING? I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THERESIEN, BUT THAT WAS -- IT WAS A GHETTO AND IT WAS A CITY; CERTAINLY NOTHING LIKE AUSCHWITZ WAS. WE HAD OUR OWN CLOTHES AND IT WAS -- WE ALWAYS USED TO SAY IN COMPARISON TO ALL THE OTHER CAMPS,

LANGER-19

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IT WAS LIKE A SPA, IF YOU WILL.

WE WORKED. WE WERE 30 YOUNG BOYS, OR 36; I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY. WE WERE LIVING IN THIS ONE CLASSROOM. THERE WAS A CERTAIN CAMARADERIE. AND THERE WERE NO HORRORS THAT WE HAVE EXPERIENCED LATER.

AND I KNOW PEOPLE WHO SURVIVED THAT PARTICULAR -- YOU KNOW, WHO SURVIVED IN THERESIEN PROBABLY HAVE -- FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT THE WHOLE WAR THAN I HAVE, HAVING GONE TO AUSCHWITZ AND BUCHENWALD. SO I HAVE NO HORRORS TO TELL ABOUT THERESIEN, THOUGH IT WAS A CONFINEMENT AND LOSS OF FREEDOM, WHAT HAVE YOU.

Q. WHAT WAS THE CAMARADERIE LIKE? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. WELL, IT WAS A CAMARADERIE THAT -- UNTIL TODAY, I MEAN OUT OF THE 30, THERE'S PROBABLY, I DON'T KNOW, 12, 13 OF US ALIVE AND SOMEHOW RE-ESTABLISHED AFTER, WHAT IS IT, 45 YEARS, RE-ESTABLISHED CONTACT. THERE WAS A GET-TOGETHER IN ISRAEL LAST YEAR BUT I COULDN'T GO BECAUSE I WAS MOVING AT THE TIME. AND I MADE A POINT THIS TIME. SOME OF THE PEOPLE, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY WERE ALIVE.

ONLY AFTER THE COMMUNISTS HAVE GONE AWAY FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA THESE PEOPLE COME OUT AND SAY, "HEY, WE ARE ALIVE." SO AS I SAID, THERE WAS TWO OF THEM IN

LANGER-20

ONE TOWN THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE '43. I SPENT HALF A DAY WITH THEM WHEN I WAS THERE. ONE OF THEM WAS SO MOVED WHEN I WAS GOING BY HE ACTUALLY KISSED MY HAND WHEN I LEFT. IT JUST BLEW ME AWAY WHEN I LEFT.

Q. WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT THEN?

A. WE TALKED OF WHAT THE OTHER PEOPLE ARE DOING THAT HAVE SURVIVED. YOU KNOW, ONE OF THEM LIVES IN SHEFFIELD IN ENGLAND; ONE OF THEM LIVES IN A KIBBUTZ IN ISRAEL; ONE OF THEM LIVES IN JERUSALEM. ONE OF THEM THAT WE TALKED ABOUT, I HAVE PROBABLY MENTIONED EARLIER THAT -- BY THE WAY, I MAY REPEAT MYSELF, WHAT I HAVE SAID EARLIER. SO IF I DO, I'M SORRY.

ONE OF THEM BECAME A BANK ROBBER IN BUENOS AIRES, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, AND HE WAS SHOT IN A HOLD-UP. I MEAN I THINK I MENTIONED IT. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER. SEVERAL -- ONE OF THEM LIVES IN SWITZERLAND. SO WE ARE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND WE ARE SORT OF TRYING TO GET TOGETHER AT ONE TIME.

WE MADE AN ATTEMPT WHILE I WAS IN EUROPE TO DO THAT BUT IT BECAME A LITTLE BIT AWKWARD. SO THERE IS MORE OF A -- WHATEVER IT WAS THEN, IT WAS SOMETHING THAT NOW, WHEN WE ARE ALL AROUND 60, THAT WE HAVE THE NEED OR THE DESIRE TO GET TOGETHER AND KEEP CONTACT.

Q. AND THEN WHEN YOU WERE MORE OR LESS

LANGER-21

1
2 CONFINED TOGETHER, WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT? DID YOU
3 TALK ABOUT FREEDOM? DID YOU TALK ABOUT FOOD? ABOUT
4 SPORTS?

5 A. I THINK WE TALKED ABOUT SPORTS, WE TALKED
6 ABOUT FOOD. I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT MY FEELINGS WERE THEN
7 PERSONAL. I JUST CAN'T TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THAT AT
8 ALL. PROBABLY WAS JUST SORT OF DAY-TO-DAY LIFE,
9 DAY-TO-DAY AND HOPING THAT THE WAR WILL STOP AND THAT WE
10 WILL BE FREE. THAT WAS OUR ONLY DESIRE; AT LEAST MINE.
11 BECAUSE WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER AND -- I JUST WANTED TO GO
12 BACK TO MY HOMETOWN, JUST DESPERATELY TRYING TO GO HOME,
13 AND I STARTED WHERE I LEFT OFF. I DON'T KNOW IF I EVER
14 CAUGHT UP, BUT THAT WAS MY ATTEMPT ANYHOW.

15 Q. WHEN YOU SAY IT WAS DAY-TO-DAY LIFE, DID
16 YOU EVER THINK BEYOND THAT DAY OR BEYOND PERHAPS THE
17 NEXT DAY AND WONDER WAS IT GOING TO GET BETTER? WAS IT
18 GOING TO GET WORSE? HOW WAS IT GOING TO BE DIFFERENT?
19 WHEN WERE THINGS GOING TO CHANGE?

20 A. WELL, WORSE, AT LEAST I DON'T THINK MANY
21 PEOPLE HAD AN IDEA THAT PLACES LIKE AUSCHWITZ EXISTED,
22 AND THAT WAS OUR NEXT STOP WHEN WE CAME, WAS
23 AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU. SO OBVIOUSLY WE THOUGHT IT'S GOT TO
24 GET BETTER AND IT'S GOING TO STOP; WE'RE GOING TO
25 SURVIVE IT.

LANGER-22

1 WE DID NOT KNOW THE EXISTENCE OF THE GAS
2 CHAMBERS UNTIL WE ACTUALLY CAME TO BIRKENAU-AUSCHWITZ.
3 SO LOOKING BACK, PERHAPS BESIDES LUCK THAT'S WHAT KEPT
4 ME ALIVE. I DON'T KNOW. OTHER PEOPLE HAD A DESIRE AND
5 PROBABLY JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE LUCK THAT I DID. I DON'T
6 KNOW. BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE DIDN'T SURVIVE AND I DID.

7 AND THAT RIGHT AFTER THE WAR, I'VE
8 QUESTIONED IT MANY TIMES: WHY ME AND WHY NOT MY
9 FRIENDS? AND YOU KNOW THIS INTERVIEW AND THE ONE COMING
10 BACK HERE SORT OF BROUGHT IT BACK. AND I ASK THAT
11 QUESTION RIGHT NOW; I'M THINKING ABOUT IT AS I AM
12 TALKING TO YOU. AND I DON'T HAVE THE ANSWER FOR IT.
13 WHY ME AND WHY NOT THE OTHERS?

14 Q. CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING THAT KEPT YOU
15 GOING? MAYBE IT ISN'T THE ULTIMATE ANSWER TO THE
16 QUESTION, BUT WHAT DID YOU DRAW ON? WAS IT WITHIN YOU,
17 EITHER WITHIN YOU OR FROM THE EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCE THAT
18 MOTIVATED YOU AND YOU HELD ONTO?

19 A. MAYBE IT'S SOME SUBCONSCIOUS STRENGTH THAT
20 I WAS NOT AWARE OF THEN. I'M AWARE OF HAVING SOME
21 STRENGTH NOW WITHIN ME, AND THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT -- THAT
22 AND MAYBE NAIVETE.

23 YOU KNOW, PHYSICALLY I WAS AS STRONG OR AS
24 WEAK AS A LOT OF OTHERS, YOU KNOW. MY MOTHER AND MY
25

LANGER-23

1
2 BROTHER AND I SURVIVED, AND THERE WERE NOT VERY MANY --
3 YOU KNOW, VERY FEW PEOPLE THAT SO MANY PEOPLE OF THE
4 FAMILY SURVIVED; MAYBE ONE OR TWO. BUT THREE OF US
5 SURVIVED, AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT EVEN -- SOMETHING
6 ELSE WE TALKED ABOUT, YOU KNOW, WHEN I WAS BACK, WHEN I
7 MET SOME OF THE PEOPLE: HOW MANY PEOPLE FROM ONE FAMILY
8 SURVIVED.

9 I MEAN THERE WAS ONLY TWO FAMILIES, AND I
10 WAS NOT ONE OF THEM, THAT, YOU KNOW, THAT THE PARENTS
11 AND THE CHILDREN SURVIVED THE WAR. I MEAN THAT'S
12 SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT, AND I GUESS THAT WAS
13 AN EVENT.

14 THERE IS ONE NAME, YOU KNOW, THAT WE TALKED
15 ABOUT, ONE MAN WHO WAS WITH US IN CAMP. AND AS WE WERE
16 TALKING, HIS NAME CAME UP. AND I SAID, "OH, BY THE WAY,
17 IS HE ALIVE?" WELL, HE'S BEEN DEAD SINCE 1944, 1945,
18 AND THIS PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT
19 IT.

20 SO THAT WOULD PERHAPS SHOW YOU THAT PEOPLE
21 ARE NOT PREOCCUPIED TO SEE WHO IS ALIVE, WHO IS DEAD,
22 WHO SURVIVED THE WAR. I GUESS IT'S PROBABLY A CERTAIN
23 SENSE OF SELFISHNESS, I DON'T KNOW, THAT COMES ABOUT,
24 THAT PEOPLE SAY, "WELL, I'M HERE," AND THEY DON'T DWELL
25 VERY MUCH WHY AND WHAT. AND THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT I DO

LANGER-24

1
2 NOW. AS I SAID, I THOUGHT ABOUT IT MORE NOW AS WE TALK,
3 YOU KNOW, WHY ME AND WHY NOT THE OTHERS?

4 AND THEN I ALSO HAVE DIFFICULTY, YOU KNOW,
5 I SORT OF THINK IN TWO LANGUAGES, SO IT'S A LITTLE BIT
6 CONFUSING. BUT I MANAGE SOMEHOW.

7 Q. YOU REFER IN RETROSPECT TO THERESIEN AS
8 ALMOST LIKE A SPA. BUT AT SOME POINT WHEN YOU WERE
9 THERE, I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS THE DAY YOU GOT
10 TRANSPORTED, THINGS STARTED GETTING WORSE?

11 A. VERY MUCH SO.

12 Q. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

13 A. I THINK I MIGHT HAVE MENTIONED THAT IT WAS
14 VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME ALL OF A SUDDEN TO FIND MYSELF IN
15 A ROOM WITH, YOU KNOW, BUNK BEDS, A ROOM OF MAYBE DOUBLE
16 THE SIZE OF THIS ROOM THAT WAS 30 PEOPLE LIVING IN IT.
17 AND THAT WAS SOMETHING THAT I HAD A HARD TIME WITH. I
18 HAD A HARD TIME GETTING USED TO IT.

19 AND, IN FACT, WHEN I MET THESE THREE
20 FRIENDS DURING MY LAST TRIP TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, I SAID,
21 "YOU REMEMBER THAT I -- YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T MANAGE VERY
22 WELL, NOT AS WELL AS SOME OF THE OTHER PEOPLE DID, YOU
23 KNOW. I WAS NOT HANDLING IT VERY WELL." AND IT WAS A
24 SHOCK. THERE WAS MAYBE A TRAUMA, BUT YOU JUST HAD TO GO
25 ON.

LANGER-25

Q. HOW WAS IT FOR A YOUNG TEENAGER TO NOT
HANDLE THINGS VERY WELL? WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

A. WELL, PERHAPS WHEN I DIDN'T HANDLE IT VERY
WELL, IT JUST TOOK ME A LITTLE BIT LONGER MAYBE TO
BECOME ONE OF THE OTHER BOYS. AND, YOU KNOW, I HAVE
NEVER ASKED -- ACTUALLY, THIS THOUGHT JUST CAME TO MY
HEAD, HOW THEY HAVE PERCEIVED ME THE WAY I WAS THEN.

THAT'S AN INTERESTING QUESTION. IT'S
SOMETHING I'LL REMEMBER WHEN I MEET THEM AGAIN. I WILL
ASK THEM HOW DID THEY VIEW ME IN THE WAY I WAS THEN AND
THE WAY THEY VIEW ME TODAY.

YOU KNOW, TODAY I FEEL THAT THEY LOOK AT ME
WITH A CERTAIN RESPECT. YOU KNOW, THEY ALL MANAGED
WELL. I MEAN THEY ALL DO WELL, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
THOSE WHO HAD TO STAY BEHIND IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BECAUSE
OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY JUST HAD A MISERABLE
EXISTENCE, LIKE MOST OF THEM. BUT I COULD PERHAPS
DETECT, AND IT WAS NEVER VERBALIZED, A CERTAIN ENVY THAT
I HAVE GONE OUT, YOU KNOW, OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND MANAGED
WELL FOR MYSELF. AND MAYBE ENVY IS TOO STRONG A WORD,
BUT -- AND THEN PERHAPS ONLY MY FEELING.

BUT THAT QUESTION, I'M GOING TO BRING IT
UP. I MEAN, "HOW DID YOU VIEW ME THEN?" I FEEL HOW
THEY -- HOW THEY LOOK AT ME NOW, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW IT

LANGER-26

1 WAS THEN. THAT'S SOMETHING I'M GOING TO MAKE A NOTE OF
2 AND QUESTION IT.
3

4 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU FELT THEN WHEN YOU
5 FELT LIKE THINGS WEREN'T GOING WELL BECAUSE OF YOURSELF
6 SOMEHOW?

7 A. I CAN ONLY TELL YOU HOW I FEEL NOW HOW I
8 THOUGHT I WAS THEN. AND I -- YOU KNOW, I WISH I WERE
9 MORE -- EVERYBODY TELLS ME THAT I'M VERY ASSERTIVE NOW,
10 AND THAT'S PROBABLY -- I WASN'T THAT MUCH THAT WAY THEN.
11 AND I ONLY WISH I WERE DIFFERENT BECAUSE THAT WOULD HAVE
12 MADE IT EASIER FOR MYSELF.

13 NOT THAT I -- I DID NOT HANDLE THERESIEN
14 VERY WELL. WELL, AGAIN I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET A WRONG
15 PICTURE. IT'S JUST THAT BEING TOGETHER WITH A GROUP OF
16 30 BOYS IN ONE ROOM, YOU KNOW, I -- WE PLAYED SOCCER AND
17 DID ALL THINGS. BUT AS STRANGE AS IT MAY SOUND, I COULD
18 HAVE MAYBE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES HAD MORE FUN THAN I
19 THOUGHT I HAD.

20 DO I MAKE ANY SENSE AT ALL?

21 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER A DAY OR A WEEK OR SOME
22 PERIOD OF TIME WHEN YOU THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS YOU HAD
23 GOTTEN USED TO THERESIEN BUT YOU KNEW SOMETHING ELSE WAS
24 COMING? DO YOU REMEMBER A TIME --

25 A. COMING? LIKE WHAT?

LANGER-27

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2

Q. LIKE --

3

A. LIKE MESSIAH?

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Q. NO, MORE LIKE MAYBE THE WAR WASN'T GOING TO
END OR MAYBE WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE HERE VERY MUCH LONGER
AND WE'RE GOING TO GO SOMEPLACE ELSE. DO YOU REMEMBER A
DAY WHEN YOU STARTED HEARING RUMORS OR WHEN YOU STARTED
TALKING AMONG YOURSELVES ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING TO COME
NEXT?

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A. LOOKING BACK, I MEAN NOW, I NEVER THOUGHT
THAT I WOULD DIE. AT LEAST I DON'T REMEMBER THAT I
THOUGHT THAT I WOULD NOT MAKE IT. I -- EVEN WHEN WE
WERE ON THE DEATH MARCH IN WINTER AND BOMBS FALLING
AROUND ME, I NEVER THOUGHT THAT I WOULD NOT MAKE IT. AT
LEAST I DON'T REMEMBER THAT I DID. SOMEHOW I ALWAYS
THOUGHT I'M GOING TO PULL THROUGH IT.

17

18

19

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AND THAT'S LOOKING AT IT TODAY. I DON'T
HAVE -- DON'T REMEMBER HAVING ANY OTHER THOUGHTS, THAT I
SAID, "WELL, THIS IS IT." I NEVER THOUGHT THAT THIS IS
IT; UNDER THE WORST OF CIRCUMSTANCE, ACTUALLY.

21

22

23

24

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AND SOME OF THEM -- YOU KNOW, THEY WERE
PRETTY CLOSE. BUT YOU KNOW THE DEATH MARCH AND NO FOOD
AND THE CHAOS IN 1945 WHEN THE GERMANS WERE RETREATING,
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT I AM GOING TO -- THAT I'M GOING TO
SEE A BETTER DAY. AND I HAVE.

LANGER-28

Q. ON THE DAY THAT YOU WERE TRANSPORTED FROM
THERESIEN EAST WAS NOT A BETTER DAY?

A. NO, IT WASN'T A BETTER DAY. I HAVE NOT A
VERY GOOD RECOLLECTION OF IT. I DO REMEMBER IT WAS A
RAILROAD CAR. IT WAS NOT A PASSENGER CAR; IT WAS A
CATTLE CAR, YOU KNOW. AND WE WERE ALL SHOVED IN THERE.
I DO NOT HAVE A GOOD RECOLLECTION. IT'S VERY HAZY.

BUT IT WAS TERRIBLE. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE
WE WERE GOING. WE ARRIVED AT NIGHT IN
BIRKENAU-AUSCHWITZ. MAYBE IT'S JUST AS WELL THAT I
DON'T REMEMBER VERY WELL; MAYBE JUST AS WELL.

Q. WHO WERE THERE ON THAT CATTLE CAR WITH YOUR
PARENTS? YOU WERE THERE?

A. UH-HUH, AND MY BROTHER. YEAH, I DON'T HAVE
ANY -- PROBABLY WAS DAY AND A HALF, AND I DON'T REMEMBER
IT VERY WELL. I KNOW I WAS ON IT; JUST VERY, VERY HAZY,
VERY HAZY.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOLLECTION OF TALKING TO
ONE ANOTHER WHEN YOU WERE ON THAT CAR OR WHAT
TRANSPIRED?

A. I CAN'T. I CAN'T TELL YOU ANYTHING AT ALL.
I CAN'T TELL YOU.

Q. AND SO ABOUT A DAY AND A HALF PASSES AND
YOU GET TO BIRKENAU. AND I RECALL THAT YOU DESCRIBED IT

LANGER-29

1 AS BEING VERY MUCH LIKE A MOVIE YOU SAW; THAT IT WAS
2 NIGHT AND THE DOGS WERE BARKING?

3 A. DID I SAY THAT?

4 Q. UH-HUH. AND THAT IT WAS CHAOTIC AND --

5 A. UH-HUH.

6 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU WERE THINKING OR
7 DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE FIRST THINGS YOU DID OR SAW?

8 A. HUH-UH. I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE.

9 Q. WHAT'S YOUR FIRST MEMORY THEN OF BIRKENAU?

10 A. GERMANS IN UNIFORM, CHAOS, MASSES OF
11 PEOPLE. NO, I REALLY DON'T. I REALLY DON'T. SOME
12 THINGS I REMEMBER VERY CLEARLY. I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO
13 RECOLLECTION OF IT AT ALL. I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT
14 IT UNTIL YOU JUST ASKED THAT QUESTION EVER, I DON'T
15 THINK. I KNOW I HAVE -- I MEAN IF I HAD KNOWN THAT I
16 WOULD BE THERE, I -- YOU KNOW, I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER
17 ARRIVING THERE. BUT I WAS THERE ALL RIGHT.

18 Q. SO WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER OF GETTING USED TO
19 IT?

20 A. I REMEMBER OF NOT GETTING USED TO IT. IT
21 WAS, JUST AGAIN, DAY-TO-DAY. PERHAPS AS I HAVE TOLD YOU
22 SO MANY TIMES THE FACT THAT I WAS NOT TERRIBLY
23 PREOCCUPIED WITH MY WARTIME EXPERIENCES THAT I CANNOT BE
24 MORE ELOQUENT ABOUT IT. NEVER EXPRESSED IT; JUST WAS
25

LANGER-30

1
2 NOT PREOCCUPIED. I DON'T KNOW HOW BEST TO SAY IT. USED
3 TO IT, NOT. OF COURSE, THAT ONE WAS DRASTICALLY
4 DIFFERENT, YOU KNOW; SHAVED YOUR HEAD, TOOK YOUR CLOTHES
5 AWAY, GOT STRIPED CLOTHES, SURROUNDED WITH BARBED WIRE
6 WITH ELECTRICITY IN IT.

7 WHEN I SEE PICTURES OF IT TODAY, AND AS I
8 SAID TO YOU, I SOMETIMES WATCH SOME OF THE FILMS, I CAN
9 HARDLY BELIEVE THAT I HAVE GONE THROUGH THAT; THAT I AM
10 ACTUALLY ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE THAT I AM LOOKING AT. AND
11 I DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR BUT I CAN
12 ONLY TELL YOU WHAT I FEEL. YOU KNOW, IT WOULD BE
13 INTERESTING IF ANY OF THESE BOYS -- BOYS THEN, MEN
14 TODAY -- WERE SITTING HERE WITH ME TODAY.

15 I WOULD BE INTERESTED TO HEAR WHAT THEY
16 HAVE TO SAY IF YOU PLACE THEM THE SAME QUESTION. I
17 WOULD BE REALLY -- I'M ALMOST INTRIGUED NOW, YOU KNOW.
18 I WONDER WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE SAID, BECAUSE THEY MIGHT
19 HAVE COME FROM A DIFFERENT TOWN THAN I DID. BUT THEY
20 HAVE GONE DURING THE WAR THROUGH THE SAME SORT OF
21 EXPERIENCE THAT I HAVE. AND THAT WOULD BE VERY
22 INTERESTING, YOU KNOW.

23 I DON'T THINK -- THERE'S NOBODY HERE THAT I
24 KNOW OF, NOBODY THAT'S IN THE UNITED STATES. I WOULD
25 LIKE TO SEE A SIMILAR INTERVIEW; ACTUALLY ONE OF THESE

LANGER-31

1 WAS INTERVIEWED IN GERMANY. HE TOLD ME THAT HE DID THE
2 SAME THING. I WOULD LIKE TO WATCH THAT AND SEE HOW
3 THEY -- YOU KNOW, HOW DID THEY HANDLE IT? WHAT DID THEY
4 SAY? WHAT DO THEY REMEMBER? SEE, I CAN'T -- I THINK I
5 TOLD YOU ON THE PHONE, I MEAN I CAN'T MAKE UP STORIES.
6 I'M NOT A STORYTELLER. IF I DON'T REMEMBER IT, I WON'T
7 TELL YOU.

9 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT YOUR
10 DAY WAS LIKE? I UNDERSTAND THAT WHERE YOU WERE IN
11 BIRKENAU ⁱⁿ IS KIND OF A HOLDING TANK FOR FAMILIES.

12 A. I THINK, YOU KNOW, THEY WERE ALL "HOLDING
13 TANKS," USING YOUR TERM. WHAT DO I REMEMBER? I
14 REMEMBER, YOU KNOW -- YOU PROBABLY KNOW QUITE A LOT
15 ABOUT IT, BUT BIRKENAU WAS A CAMP. YOU KNOW, THERE WERE
16 SEVERAL OF THOSE CAMPS, AND THE BARRACKS WERE FRENCH
17 ARMY STABLES, YOU KNOW, LONG ONES.

18 AND THE BUNKS WERE DIFFERENT THAN THE BUNKS
19 WE HAD AT THERESIEN. THERESIEN WE HAD AT LEAST A STRAW
20 MATTRESS. THERE WAS JUST NOTHING BUT BOARDS AND WE
21 WERE -- I DON'T KNOW, TEN OF THEM LIVED IN -- SLEEPING
22 IN ONE OF THOSE. IT WAS ONE, TWO, THREE; IT WAS A
23 THREE-STORY BUNK.

24 AND ONE THING THAT I REMEMBER MOST OUT OF
25 THE WHOLE WARTIME EXPERIENCE AND THE THING THAT WAS

LANGER-32

1
2 WORST IS TOLERANCE OF COLD. THE REASON I MENTION IT IS
3 BECAUSE WE WERE VERY COLD THEN. I THINK PROBABLY COLD
4 IS WORSE THAN HUNGER. WHEN YOU'RE COLD AND HUNGRY,
5 THAT'S PROBABLY THE WORST. BUT I THINK PROBABLY COLD IS
6 THE WORST THING.

7 AND I OFTEN MENTION IT; I MEAN THAT'S
8 SOMETHING THAT I OFTEN MENTION AT HOME TO MY WIFE, TO MY
9 CHILDREN, YOU KNOW, THAT COLD THAT I REMEMBER, COLD IN
10 19 -- AND THE COLD THAT I EXPERIENCED THE MOST WAS 1945
11 FROM JANUARY TILL ABOUT APRIL, APRIL WHEN THE WAR --
12 WHEN THE GERMANS -- GOOD GOD, WHAT HAPPENED?

13 (INTERRUPTION). I THOUGHT IT WAS AN EARTHQUAKE.

14 THAT IS PERHAPS THE HARDEST AND THAT'S
15 SOMETHING THAT REALLY STANDS OUT IN MY MIND. FIRST OF
16 ALL, I HAVE FROZEN FEET. BUT TOLERANCE OF COLD IS -- I
17 MEAN INTOLERANCE OF COLD IS THE WORST THING THAT I
18 REMEMBER. SO THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I EXPERIENCED
19 COLD. I DON'T REMEMBER HAVING BLANKETS. MUD AND SNOW,
20 DIDN'T HAVE PROPER CLOTHES. THAT WAS A SUFFERING THAT,
21 YOU KNOW, I WAS ASKING "WHY?" YOU KNOW, "WHAT DID I DO?
22 I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING."

23 THIS IS WHY AS MUCH AS I ENJOY -- AND I
24 MIGHT HAVE MENTIONED IT IN THE EARLIER INTERVIEW, YOU
25 KNOW. GOING TO GERMANY, IT IS SUCH AN ORDERLY COUNTRY.

LANGER-33

1
2 IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL. AND I LIKE ORDER AND I LIKE -- I
3 STILL HAVE A VERY STRANGE FEELING GOING TO GERMANY.

4 AND THEN IF I MAY DIGRESS? I'M CERTAINLY
5 GOING AWAY FROM YOUR QUESTION. AND I'VE ASKED THE
6 PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, HOW -- I WOULD NEVER WANT TO BRING UP
7 MY CHILDREN IN GERMANY. I MEAN, I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE
8 THERE; GOING TO MUNICH, GOING TO THE ALPS. IT'S SO
9 BEAUTIFUL, YOU KNOW. I MEAN IT WAS A COUNTRY THAT WAS
10 DEFEATED IN THE WAR, AND THEY ARE SO WELL-ORGANIZED.

11 BUT I COULD NEVER BRING UP MY FAMILY THERE.
12 I WOULD HAVE -- AND I SPEAK GERMAN QUITE FLUENTLY, BUT I
13 HAVE TROUBLE SPEAKING IT, CERTAINLY TO GERMANS. AND I
14 DO THAT, YOU KNOW. I MEAN, I DON'T -- THERE'S SOMETHING
15 IN ME THAT HOLDS ME BACK. AND I SAY, YOU KNOW, WHY, YOU
16 KNOW, A COUNTRY THAT IS SO -- I MEAN SUCH MUSIC AND SO
17 CIVILIZED COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING, WHAT THEY HAVE
18 DONE?

19 THAT'S ANOTHER THING THAT I ASK AS MUCH AS
20 WHY DID I SURVIVE? YOU KNOW, WHY DID THEY DO THAT? I'M
21 ALMOST SORRY TO SEE SUCH A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, WHAT THEY
22 HAVE DONE, BECAUSE I COULD HAVE RELATED SO MUCH BETTER
23 TO THEM. BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY -- YOU KNOW, WHAT THEY DO
24 I LIKE SO MUCH, YOU KNOW, I LIKE VERY MUCH. AND I
25 QUESTION, HOW CAN YOU LIVE HERE? I MEAN, WHAT IS IT

LANGER-34

1
2 LIKE TO LIVE HERE? THEY JUST PROBABLY HAVE TO TUNE OUT
3 THE OTHER THING. AT LEAST I WOULD HAVE TO. CERTAINLY
4 NOTHING TO DO WITH BIRKENAU, BUT MAYBE IT DOES.

5 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THINKING ANYTHING REALLY
6 BAD THEN?

7 A. SEE, I KEEP -- NO, NO, I WAS -- I -- NO. I
8 THINK WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, I WAS NOT A VERY SERIOUS
9 YOUNG MAN. I BECAME SERIOUS MUCH LATER IN LIFE AND
10 THAT'S PERHAPS MAYBE ANOTHER REASON THAT I DON'T
11 REMEMBER. MAYBE A LITTLE BIT SUPERFICIAL; I PERHAPS WAS
12 A LITTLE BIT SUPERFICIAL WHEN I WAS YOUNG, LOOKING BACK.
13 THIS IS MAYBE ONE -- I STARTED TO BE SERIOUS ON MANY
14 LEVELS WHEN I WAS QUITE A BIT OLDER. SO THIS IS -- YOU
15 KNOW, WHAT I'M THINKING NOW WASN'T EVEN CROSSING MY MIND
16 THEN.

17 Q. SO WHAT WERE YOUR PREOCCUPATIONS THEN? YOU
18 MENTIONED THE OVERWHELMING COLD. WHAT DID YOU DO TO TRY
19 TO PROTECT AGAINST IT? WHAT COULD YOU DO?

20 A. WELL, THERE WERE TIMES, AND I'VE MENTIONED,
21 YOU KNOW, AGAIN I REPEAT MYSELF. WE HAD A FRIEND, GOT
22 CEMENT BAGS, YOU KNOW; THEY ARE SEVERAL LAYERS OF PAPER.
23 WE TRY TO CUT A HOLE OUT AND PUT THAT UNDER OUR CLOTHES
24 TO KEEP WARMER; PUT PAPER IN OUR SHOES, WHATEVER SHOES
25 WE HAD, JUST TO KEEP THE COLD. BUT THERE'S NOTHING --

LANGER-35

1
2 CERTAINLY COULDN'T HAVE GONE AND GOT SOME WOOD AND START
3 A FIRE BECAUSE THERE WAS NO FIRE, YOU KNOW, TO BE -- TO
4 MAKE. IT'S JUST GO ON, I GUESS.

5 FORTUNATELY, I DID NOT LOSE ANY LIMBS. AND
6 I HAVE SEEN THAT HAPPEN; PEOPLE LOST THEIR TOES, OR I
7 JUST LOST PART OF IT. I JUST LOST PART OF IT. BUT THAT
8 AND HUNGER, HUNGER IS ANOTHER THING THAT WAS -- TWO
9 THINGS THAT REALLY I REMEMBER WELL. I THINK OF THOSE
10 MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

11 BY MR. KIRSCHMAN:

12 Q. DID YOU WORK THERE?

13 A. YEAH. WHEN YOU SAY "THERE," DURING THE
14 WAR? NO, THAT WAS NOT A WORK CAMP. WE JUST SAT THERE.

15 Q. WHAT DID YOU THINK THAT WAS ALL ABOUT THAT
16 WAS GOING ON?

17 A. RICHARD, I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY FEELINGS AT
18 ALL; JUST DIDN'T KNOW.

19 Q. DID YOU EVER --

20 A. I'M EMBARRASSED ALMOST NOW SITTING HERE AND
21 SAYING IT ON CAMERA THAT I DON'T HAVE ANY FEELINGS ABOUT
22 THAT. I DID NOT -- I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT.

23 MAYBE IT'S GOOD OR MAYBE IT'S BAD, YOU
24 KNOW. MAYBE IT WILL HELP ME LATER ON IN LIFE NOT TO
25 HAVE RECOGNIZED THE GRAVITY OF IT, BECAUSE LOOKING BACK,

LANGER-36

IT WAS PRETTY, PRETTY, PRETTY GRAVE; PRETTY SERIOUS.

YOU KNOW, AS I'M SITTING HERE TALKING ABOUT IT, SOME PICTURES ARE MOVING ON THROUGH MY BRAIN AND IT'S -- YOU KNOW, MOST PEOPLE DON'T SEE THIS IN LIFE. I MEAN, YOU KNOW, A 14-YEAR-OLD BOY SHOULDN'T GO THROUGH SOMETHING LIKE THAT, OR A 40- OR 50-YEAR-OLD MAN, FOR THAT MATTER. IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT MOST PEOPLE EXPERIENCE IN THEIR LIVES.

HAS IT MARKED ME? MY WIFE SAYS VERY MUCH. SURE, IT HAS LEFT ME WITH A MARK. WHAT WOULD HAVE BECOME OF ME IF I HADN'T GONE THROUGH CAMP? ALLAH, WHO KNOWS? WHO KNOWS? I DON'T KNOW. AS I SAID, I HAVE NO THOUGHTS; CAN'T REMEMBER OF HAVING ANY.

Q. DID YOU NEVER BECOME AWARE THAT THIS WAS A DEATH CAMP WHEN YOU WERE THERE?

A. OH, YEAH, I COULD SMELL IT. I COULD SMELL THE SMELL, THE CREMATORIUMS. THEY WERE NOT VERY FAR AWAY FROM US, YOU KNOW. SKY BLACK WITH, YOU KNOW -- WHEN YOU BURN HUMAN HAIR, THERE IS A VERY DEFINITE STENCH. WE KNEW WHAT WAS THERE, BUT SOMEHOW I THINK THAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME.

AND MAYBE YOU WERE -- YOU KNOW, YOU ARE SO NUMB THAT YOU WERE APATHETIC MAYBE. I DON'T KNOW, NAIVE. I JUST CAN'T REALLY TELL YOU TODAY WHAT MY --

LANGER-37

YOU KNOW, HOW I REALLY FELT THEN. BUT TO THE BEST OF MY RECOLLECTION, I DIDN'T THINK THAT I WOULD DIE.

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. DO YOU EVER REMEMBER ASKING ONE OF YOUR FELLOW INMATES OR ONE OF THE CAPOS OR ANYBODY WHAT WAS GOING ON, WHO GOT KILLED? ANYTHING, ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT IT?

A. MY DEAR, WE SAW DEATH EVERY DAY, YOU KNOW. THERE WERE DEAD BODIES, STARVATION, EVERY DAY PULLED OUT OF THE CAMP. YOU KNOW, CARTS OF -- THERE WAS A COMMANDER -- YOU KNOW WHAT LIEUTENANT COMMANDERS WERE -- 10, 15 MEN PULLING A CART; THEY THREW THE BODIES. SAW IT EVERY DAY. I DIDN'T HAVE TO ASK ANYTHING. I SAW IT. I DIDN'T ASK. I MEAN, DEATH WAS EVER PRESENT.

Q. AND YOU STILL THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T BE ONE OF THOSE?

A. AS I SIT HERE TODAY, YEAH. I MEAN I NEVER THOUGHT THAT I WOULD DIE, NO. MAYBE THAT WAS PROOF OF MY NAIVETE. I DON'T KNOW.

BUT I THINK, IN ALL SERIOUSNESS, PERHAPS SOME INNER STRENGTH THAT PULLED ME THROUGH. BUT I KNOW -- NO, I DON'T THINK I HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT I WILL BE ONE OF THEM.

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LANGER-38

1
2 YOU KNOW THE TERM "MUZZLEMAN"? HAVE YOU
3 EVER HEARD IT? WELL, I WASN'T ONE. I MEAN, I WAS
4 CERTAINLY VERY THIN. MUZZLEMAN WAS A PERSON, YOU KNOW,
5 WE CALL IT SOMEONE WHO WAS VERY THIN, LIKE A MOSLEM.
6 THEY WERE VERY EMACIATED, VERY THIN.

7 IS THAT THE WORD; RIGHT? VERY THIN. SOME
8 PEOPLE JUST -- LIKE YOU SEE, YOU KNOW, YOU SEE THE CAMP,
9 YOU SEE PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA, JUST SKIN AND BONES. WELL,
10 I WAS NEVER LIKE THAT. AND I DON'T THINK I HAD ANY MORE
11 FOOD THAN ANYBODY ELSE; VERY THIN, BUT NEVER LIKE THAT
12 BECAUSE I WOULDN'T BE HERE.

13 Q. CAN YOU SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT FOOD AND
14 EATING?

15 A. YOU MEAN THE LACK OF IT?

16 Q. WHAT DID YOU EAT? WITH WHOM DID YOU EAT?
17 WHO COOKED THE FOOD?

18 A. OH, COOKED, THERE WAS -- THE BEST OF MY
19 RECOLLECTION -- NAW, I DON'T REMEMBER. OBVIOUSLY IT WAS
20 SOME COMMUNAL THING. THEY BROUGHT A SOUP, I THINK IS
21 ALL WE ATE.

22 IN FACT, AFTER THE WAR WE NEVER ATE SOUP.
23 MY MOTHER NEVER COOKED SOUP AFTER THE WAR BECAUSE IT'S
24 ALL WE HAD, WAS SOUP; SOUP WITH BEETS IN IT. THAT'S
25 ALL. JUST -- AND YOU ALWAYS TRIED TO BE AT THE END OF

LANGER-39

1 THE LINE BECAUSE IT WAS A LITTLE THICKER AT THE BOTTOM.
2 AND THERE WAS SOME POTATOES IN IT, I THINK.

3 ARE YOU TURNING IT OFF?

4 MR. KIRSCHNER: WHY DON'T YOU FOLKS CONTINUE AND
5 I'LL SEE WHAT IS GOING ON HERE.

6 A. IT WAS JUST SOUP. WE DID GET SOME BREAD, I
7 THINK, YOU KNOW, A LITTLE PIECE OF HARD BREAD, BROWN
8 BREAD SOMETIMES. I KNOW THAT IN BEST OF MY RECOLLECTION
9 NOW I HAD A COUSIN WHO -- MY FIRST COUSIN LIVED IN
10 VIENNA AND SHE MANAGED TO OBTAIN ARYAN PAPERS AS THEY
11 WERE THEN AND LIVED THROUGH THE WAR IN VIENNA, AND SHE
12 SENT US SOME BREAD. THEY WERE ABLE TO SEND US SOME
13 BREAD. I THINK SO. BUT, YOU KNOW, IT WAS JUST BARE
14 EXISTENCE, YOU KNOW, FOOD. THERE WAS NO -- SOUP WAS THE
15 THING THAT I REMEMBER MOST OF THE TIME; VERY THIN ONE
16 TOO.

17 MR. KIRSCHMAN: WHERE DID YOU EAT IT? IN THE
18 BARRACKS?

19 A. BARRACKS. YOU KNOW, YOU GOT A METAL PLATE
20 AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT YOU REALLY PROTECTED. ON THE
21 FLOOR, WHEREVER. THERE WAS NO TABLES OR ANYTHING LIKE
22 THAT; ON THE FLOOR. YOU SIT ON YOUR BUNK MOST OF THE
23 TIME.

24 //

LANGER-40

1

2 BY MS. BACKOVER:

3 Q. WERE THERE EVER ANY SCHEMES TO GET MORE
4 FOOD OR ANYTHING?

5 A. YEAH. WELL, AT ONE TIME WHEN I WAS -- WHEN
6 I LEFT, BEST OF MY RECOLLECTION NOW, I WAS IN A CAMP
7 CALLED BLOCHOMER, AND I PROBABLY TALKED ABOUT IT
8 SOMEWHAT EARLIER ON THE FIRST TAPE.

9 I WORKED -- I WAS CLEANING AN OFFICE FOR
10 SOME GERMANS AND THERE WERE BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR IN
11 THE SAME CAMP AND THEY GOT PACKAGES; THEY GOT CHOCOLATE,
12 AND THE GERMANS HAD NO CHOCOLATE.

13 SO THEY ASKED ME TO GO AND TAKE BREAD AND
14 TRADE BREAD WITH THE BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR FOR
15 CHOCOLATE. SO, YOU KNOW, I GOT TWO LOAVES AND I KEPT
16 ONE, YOU KNOW, AND GAVE THE BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR
17 BREAD. BUT I DID IT ONCE OR TWICE. THAT WAS THE ONLY
18 SCHEME I HAVE EVER HAD TO GET SOME EXTRA FOOD. BUT I
19 DON'T KNOW OF ANY OTHER.

20 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

21 Q. DID YOU SPEAK ENGLISH THEN?

22 A. NO, NO, NONE AT ALL, NONE. I BARELY SPOKE
23 GERMAN THEN; JUST A LITTLE BIT. GOOD OLD HANDS.

24 Q. IS THAT WHERE YOU LEARNED TO SPEAK GERMAN?

25 A. YEAH, THE WARTIME. SOMETIMES GERMAN PEOPLE

LANGER-41

1
2 ASK ME, "WHERE DO YOU LEARN GERMAN?" I SAY, "THE HARD
3 WAY," AND THEY WOULD GET EMBARRASSED. I JUST TELL THEM
4 WHAT HAPPENED.

5 Q. YOU MUST HAVE HAD A DECENT AMOUNT OF
6 OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH GERMAN-SPEAKING PEOPLE TO
7 LEARN THE LANGUAGE.

8 A. WELL, FIRST OF ALL -- YOU MEAN DURING THE
9 WAR? WELL, I DID NOT HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH THE GERMANS
10 OTHER THAN, YOU KNOW, ANY TIME YOU WERE SPOKEN TO BY THE
11 GERMANS WAS IN GERMAN.

12 AND I HAVE A FAIRLY GOOD EAR SO, YOU KNOW,
13 I PICKED IT UP. AND THEN I HAD COUSINS AFTER THE WAR,
14 YOU KNOW. I HAVE A COUSIN THAT CAME FROM -- THAT LIVED
15 IN VIENNA AND SO I SORT OF IMPROVED IT.

16 BUT MY REAL EXPOSURE -- BECAUSE WE SPOKE
17 CZECH AT HOME, THOUGH A LOT OF CZECH-JEWS DID SPEAK
18 GERMAN, WHICH WAS -- YOU KNOW, GOING BACK TO THE
19 AUSTRIAN/HUNGARIAN PART. BUT MY PARENTS SPOKE CZECH AND
20 WE SPOKE CZECH AT HOME. MY PARENTS WERE BOTH FLUENT IN
21 CZECH AND GERMAN, BOTH OF MY PARENTS.

22 SO IT WAS JUST AS I WENT ALONG, I PICKED IT
23 UP. I DON'T READ IT. I MEAN I CAN READ IT BUT I DON'T
24 WRITE IT BECAUSE I NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY.

25 //

LANGER-42

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. YOU WERE ALLUDING TO BLOCHOMER. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE TRIP OR THE TRANSITION BETWEEN BIRKENAU AND BLOCHOMER?

A. YEAH, I REMEMBER THAT A LITTLE BETTER. THAT WAS JUST AN OPEN TRUCK, AND I REMEMBER THAT WE WERE -- THERE WAS SOMEWHAT OF A RELIEF GOING AND GETTING OUT OF BIRKENAU BECAUSE WE KNEW THAT WE WERE GOING TO A WORK CAMP. WE WERE GOING TO GET AWAY FROM A DEATH CAMP TO A WORK CAMP.

SO LOOKING BACK ON IT, IT WAS SOMEWHAT OF A RELIEF KNOWING WE WERE GETTING AWAY FROM THE IMMEDIATE DANGER. AND IT WAS A CHANGE. WE WERE SITTING ON -- WE WERE MADE TO SIT I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY IN A TRUCK WITH A COUPLE GUARDS SITTING -- GERMAN, PROBABLY SS -- GUARDING WITH THE GUNS. THEY WERE ALWAYS PRESENT.

AND WHEN WE CAME TO THE CAMP IT WASN'T -- I THINK IT'S POLAND TODAY. I THINK I MENTIONED THAT BEFORE. IT WAS A BIG REFINERY. THE CAMP WAS NEAR A REFINERY. IT WAS A BIG REFINERY. I THINK THEY WERE MANUFACTURING ARTIFICIAL MARGARINE AND TRYING TO MAKE -- I THINK THE GERMANS TRIED TO MAKE GASOLINE OUT OF COAL.

THEY WERE TRYING TO -- THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY -- WHAT DO YOU CALL IT? THEY WERE MANUFACTURING --

LANGER-43

1
2 IT WAS A REFINERY. WHAT THEY WERE DOING THERE, I DON'T
3 REMEMBER EXACTLY. IT WAS A VERY LARGE REFINERY AND ONE
4 THAT WAS OFTEN BOMBED BY THE AMERICANS.

5 AND WE WERE -- THE CAMP WAS GUARDED. IT
6 WAS ALL FENCED; THE REFINERY, RATHER, WAS ALL FENCED.
7 SO WHEN WE WERE MARCHED IN THE COLUMNS OF FIVE, IN THE
8 ROWS OF FIVE, YOU KNOW, LONG COLUMNS, WE WALKED INTO IT.
9 THEN WE WERE SORT OF FREE TO MOVE IN THERE. WE WERE
10 NOT -- BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T GET OUT OF THERE.

11 I DON'T THINK EVER ANYBODY -- NOT VERY MANY
12 PEOPLE ESCAPED. THERE WERE ONE OR TWO ESCAPED FROM THE
13 CAMP, AND THOSE WHO DID HAD THEIR -- YOU KNOW, WE HAD
14 THE STRIPED CLOTHES MARKED WITH RED, RED PAINT, AND THEY
15 COULD NEVER LEAVE THE CAMP.

16 THERE WERE ONE OR TWO, JUST AS I'M TALKING
17 ABOUT IT, I REMEMBER THAT ONE OR TWO ESCAPED. BUT
18 THAT'S SOMETHING THAT I HAVE -- I WAS THERE WITH MY
19 BROTHER. WE HAVE NEVER ENTERTAINED IT BECAUSE WE NEVER
20 THOUGHT A CHANCE OF GOING ANYPLACE. YOU KNOW, WE
21 COULDN'T -- DIDN'T THINK THAT WE COULD MAKE IT. WE
22 NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT THAT, OF ESCAPING. NEVER.
23 NEVER. I DON'T THINK I WOULD BE HERE. THERE ARE SOME
24 PEOPLE WHO MADE IT; NOT VERY MANY.

25 BUT WE WERE IN A -- MAYBE THE BARRACKS WERE

LANGER-44

A LITTLE BETTER THAN IN BIRKENAU/AUSCHWITZ. MAYBE THE SOUP HAD PROBABLY A LITTLE BIT MORE POTATOES THAN IN AUSCHWITZ BECAUSE I GUESS THEY PROBABLY FELT IF YOU GIVE US A LITTLE BETTER FOOD, THAT THEY GET A LITTLE BIT MORE WORK OUT OF US.

I WORKED ON THE RAILROAD, BUT I'M REPEATING MYSELF FROM THE PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS SO I -- I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY REAL SENSE BY THIS TIME THAT THE WAR SITUATION WAS GETTING EITHER BETTER OR WORSE OR SOMETHING?

A. I HAD CERTAINLY MORE SENSE OF THE WAR SITUATION BECAUSE VERY OFTEN WE WERE -- THERE WERE OVERFLIGHTS OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN BOMBERS. THE CAMP -- NOT THE CAMP ITSELF, BUT THE REFINERY WHERE WE WORKED WAS BOMBED HEAVILY AND WE WERE RIGHT IN IT; MANY, MANY, MANY TIMES, CLOSE TO BOMBS.

PREVIOUS INTERVIEW I MENTIONED IT AND SOME OTHER THINGS I REMEMBER QUITE OFTEN, ESPECIALLY WATCHING SOME OF THE WAR MOVIES, WHICH I DON'T DO VERY OFTEN. BUT WHENEVER I DO, I WAS LOOKING SO MUCH FORWARD TO THE AIR RAID BECAUSE I THOUGHT THAT WAS GOING TO SPEED UP THE WAR.

AND WHEN THE FIRST BOMBS CAME I WAS PRETTY

LANGER-45

1 SCARED, YOU KNOW. I DIDN'T TAKE ANY COVER. I JUST
2 WANTED TO SEE THEM COME DOWN, AND THEY CAME DOWN BUT
3 I -- MANY TIMES AFTER THAT I JUST WENT FOR COVER.

4 I REMEMBER THAT VERY OFTEN, HOW EXCITED --
5 I WAS SO EXCITED WHEN THE AMERICAN BOMBERS CAME, WHEN
6 THE BOMBS WERE FALLING. BUT IT WAS TOO CLOSE FOR
7 COMFORT, PERSONALLY. BUT NEVERTHELESS, WE WERE VERY
8 HAPPY THEY WERE BOMBING BECAUSE WE KNEW THAT THAT WAS
9 GOING TO SPEED UP THE END OF THE WAR.

10 Q. DID YOU HAVE REGULAR CONTACT WITH YOUR
11 BROTHER?

12 A. HE WAS WITH ME. WE LIVED IN THE SAME
13 BARRACK.

14 Q. DID YOU TALK ABOUT THE WAR ENDING, ABOUT --
15 A. YOU KNOW, I'M TRYING SO PRECISELY TO ANSWER
16 YOUR QUESTIONS. I JUST -- I DON'T REMEMBER IF WE TALKED
17 ABOUT HOPE, WHAT WE WERE GOING TO DO WHEN WE COME BACK,
18 BECAUSE THERE WAS ALWAYS SOME TALK ABOUT WHEN WE GET
19 BACK, WHICH WE DID.

20 OF COURSE, HE DIED LATER ON IN ISRAEL AS A
21 PILOT, BUT WE SURVIVED THE WAR. HE WAS IN THAT CAMP IN
22 BLOCHOMER. HE WAS IN THE COMMANDO PULLING UNEXPLODED
23 BOMBS. YOU KNOW, A LOT OF BOMBS THAT FELL DID NOT
24 EXPLODE, SO THEY -- THEY WERE PULLING THOSE BOMBS. AND
25

LANGER-46

1
2 THEN THERE WAS A PYROTECHNIC WHERE THEY TAKE THE FUSE
3 OUT. HE WAS DOING THAT. I REMEMBER THAT. THAT'S WHAT
4 HE WAS ATTACHED TO; PULLING UNEXPLODED BOMBS, 250-KILO
5 BOMBS. I CAN SEE THOSE BOMBS WHEN THEY PULLED THEM OUT.
6 THERE WERE NOT MANY THAT DIDN'T EXPLODE, BUT THERE WERE
7 SOME.

8 FUNNY, YOU MAKE ME THINK OF THINGS THAT I
9 HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IN MANY, MANY YEARS.

10 Q. DID HE EVER TALK ABOUT THAT JOB? BECAUSE
11 IT'S AWFULLY DANGEROUS.

12 A. INDEED. YOU KNOW, YOU KEEP ON COMING BACK
13 TO IT. I DON'T RECALL ANY CONVERSATION THAT I CAN
14 RELATE TO YOU NOW THAT WE HAD. ABSOLUTELY NONE. I'M
15 SURE WE MUST HAVE TALKED ABOUT SOMETHING. WE WERE NOT
16 SITTING THERE NOT CONVERSING. BUT I CANNOT TELL YOU. I
17 KNOW YOU KEEP ON COMING BACK TO IT, BUT I'M AFRAID I
18 CAN'T TELL YOU. I REALLY JUST DON'T KNOW.

19 Q. WHAT WAS YOUR WORK DETAIL LIKE?

20 A. WHEN AND WHERE? YOU MEAN TALKING ABOUT
21 BLOCHOMER?

22 Q. YES.

23 A. WELL, WE GOT UP VERY, VERY EARLY IN THE
24 MORNING; PROBABLY THREE O'CLOCK, I THINK. AND I
25 REMEMBER WE WERE LINED UP. HELL, YOU KNOW, WHAT THAT

LANGER-47

1
2 WORD MEANS; YOU KNOW, BODY COUNT. THEY WERE COUNTING
3 ALL THE TIMES, THE GERMANS, TO SEE IF ANYBODY ESCAPED;
4 ALWAYS COUNTING. AND IT WAS VERY EARLY. IT WAS WINTER
5 AND IT WAS VERY COLD. I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT KIND OF
6 SHOES I HAD.

7 BUT I ALSO REMEMBER THAT WE WERE GOING TO A
8 SHOWER AND SOME SORT OF A SIREN ONCE A WEEK AND CHANGE
9 CLOTHES BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF LICE. I MEAN THE LICE
10 WERE -- YOU KNOW, THE GERMANS WOULDN'T BE IMMUNE IF WE
11 GOT SICK, SO WE DID GET CLEAN CLOTHES ONCE A WEEK, I
12 BELIEVE.

13 I WORKED ON A RAILROAD. IT WAS A RAILROAD
14 CONSTRUCTION. I WAS 14, CARRYING RAILS AND DOING THAT.

15 THERE WERE ALSO FRENCH PRISONERS OF WAR IN
16 THAT CAMP. AND I REMEMBER ONE TIME -- I REMEMBER IT
17 NOW, BUT I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT ONE TOO. THEY WERE SORT
18 OF HORSING AROUND A LITTLE BIT, THE FRENCH PRISONERS OF
19 WAR. THEY WERE -- THE GERMANS, ONE GERMAN CAME OVER TO
20 HIM AND WAS SORT OF REPRIMANDING HIM. AND I REMEMBER
21 THE FRENCH PRISONERS OF WAR IN UNIFORM, HE TURNED AROUND
22 AND JUST KNOCKED HIM COLD, KNOCKED HIM OUT, THE GERMAN
23 GUARD.

24 AND I DON'T THINK THE MAN -- I MEAN THEY
25 MUST HAVE TAKEN HIM AWAY IMMEDIATELY. AND I REMEMBER

LANGER-48

1
2 THAT WE WERE SORRY FOR THE GUY BUT WE WERE SO HAPPY THAT
3 HE HAD ACTUALLY DONE HARM FOR SOMEBODY WHO WAS HARMING
4 US. THEY WERE WORKING WITH US ON THE RAILROAD.

5 I ALSO REMEMBER THAT WHEN THE BRITISH
6 PRISONERS OF WAR -- WHEN THEY WERE MARCHING IN COLUMNS
7 OF FIVE, WHENEVER WE WENT BY THEM, THEY WERE WHISTLING
8 "ROLL UP THE BARREL," WHICH IS ACTUALLY ORIGINALLY A
9 CZECH SONG, BELIEVE IT OR NOT. SO WE KNEW ABOUT IT AND
10 THEY KNEW WHAT IT WAS. SO THAT'S HOW WE WERE SORT OF
11 GREETING EACH OTHER WHEN WE COULDN'T TALK. BUT WHEN WE
12 WOULD WALK BY, THAT WAS SORT OF THE HELLO THAT WE
13 EXCHANGED.

14 AND THEY WERE TREATED FAIRLY WELL. I MEAN,
15 YOU KNOW, THE GENEVA CONVENTION, THEY GOT FOOD FROM RED
16 CROSS AND THEY HAD GOOD CLOTHES. BUT THEY WERE THERE
17 WORKING ON THE SAME -- WORKING IN THE SAME FACTORY. I
18 HAD NO -- YOU KNOW, I COULDN'T COMMUNICATE WITH THEM.
19 WHETHER ANYBODY DID, I DON'T KNOW. I'M SURE THERE WERE
20 SOME OF THE ADULTS WHO PROBABLY SPOKE -- PROBABLY SOME
21 SPOKE SOME ENGLISH, BUT I DON'T KNOW.

22 I REMEMBER ONE SHELTER, ONCE I MET AN OLD
23 BOYFRIEND OF MY MOTHER'S WHEN HE -- YOU KNOW, HE SAID,
24 "WHERE DO YOU COME FROM? WHERE DO YOU COME FROM? WHERE
25 DO YOU COME FROM?" SO I MET SOMEBODY THAT KNEW MY

LANGER-49

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2 MOTHER.

3

4 BUT THE BOMBING WAS, YOU KNOW, PRETTY
5 SCARY. WHEN I WATCH THE WAR NOW, YOU WATCH IT AND YOU
6 SAY, YOU KNOW, THAT'S HOW LIFE GOES.

7 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

8 Q. WHERE WAS YOUR MOTHER AT THIS TIME?

9 A. SHE WAS IN HAMBURG. SHE WAS IN HAMBURG.

10 SHE WAS ON A WORK DETAIL CLEANING UP THE -- CLEANING OUT
11 THE STREETS OF HAMBURG. YOU KNOW, HAMBURG WAS HEAVILY
12 BOMBED AND THEY BROUGHT THE PRISONERS IN THERE AND WERE
13 CLEANING UP THE STREETS AND WHATEVER. THAT'S WHERE SHE
14 WAS THEN.

15 BY MS. OBER:

16 Q. WERE YOU AND YOUR BROTHER ABLE TO SAY
17 GOODBYE TO HER?

18 A. I DO NOT REMEMBER. YOU MEAN WHEN WE WERE
19 SEPARATED IN BIRKENAU? I HAVE NO RECOLLECTION WHETHER
20 WE DID OR NOT. HUH-UH. I DON'T KNOW. WE DID NOT --
21 YOU KNOW, WE LIVED SEPARATELY IN THE SAME CAMP. IT WAS
22 A VERY LARGE CAMP, THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS -- I DON'T
23 KNOW HOW MANY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WERE THERE IN THAT
24 PARTICULAR CAMP. MANY, MANY. I DO NOT KNOW.

25 BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER? DID YOU HAVE ANY

LANGER-50

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IDEA -- AT THIS POINT YOU'RE IN BLOCHOMER NOW?

A. HE WAS IN BLOCHOMER AS WELL.

Q. AND YOU KNEW THAT?

A. CORRECT. HE WENT ON A DEATH MARCH WITH US WHEN -- THE THING WAS JANUARY 21, 1945, AND THERE WAS -- YOU KNOW, THE RUSSIANS, THERE WAS A PUSH. AND WE WERE VERY CLOSE TO THE FIGHTING. WE PROBABLY THOUGHT THAT WE MAY BE CAPTURED BY THE RUSSIANS. HAD WE STAYED IN THE CAMP ANOTHER DAY OR TWO, THE RUSSIANS WOULD HAVE CAME. WE WERE SO CLOSE.

AND I KNOW THE GERMANS WERE IN A PANIC. THEY PUT ON GAS MASKS, THE GUARDS, AND SHOOTING WAS VERY CLOSE. AND I MENTIONED IN THE PREVIOUS INTERVIEW THE STUPIDITY OF THE GERMANS. I MEAN, THEY JUST -- THEY JUST DIDN'T WANT -- THEY NEVER WANTED THE PRISONERS TO FALL IN THE HANDS OF THE ALLIES.

THE WRITING WAS ON THE WALL FOR THEM. THEY KNEW THAT THE WAR -- THEY JUST DID NOT -- THEY ALWAYS LIQUIDATED THE CAMPS, AND PUSHING INTO, YOU KNOW, MORE INTO GERMANY, RIGHT IN THE CENTER. THEN THEY WERE ALL CAPTURED. THE RUSSIANS WERE FEW MILES AWAY, AND THEY NEVER WANTED THE PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE HANDS OF THE RUSSIANS.

HE DIED ON THAT MARCH, I ASSUME. HOW HE

LANGER-51

1 DIED, I ASSUME THAT HE JUST COULDN'T GO ON. AND THOSE
2 WHO COULDN'T, THOSE WHO FELL ON THE SIDES WERE JUST
3 SHOT. AND THERE WAS THE CART WITH HORSES, THE BACK OF
4 THE COLUMN, AND THEY JUST -- I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED,
5 BUT THAT'S WHAT I ASSUMED HAPPENED TO HIM. BECAUSE HE
6 HAS NOT ARRIVED IN GROSSROSEN, WHICH WAS THE NEXT STOP.

7 Q. YOU WERE ABLE TO STAY MORE OR LESS WITH
8 YOUR BROTHER?

9 A. UH-HUH.

10 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ENCOURAGING HIM, HELPING
11 HIM THROUGH THIS?

12 A. JUST VAGUELY. I REMEMBER THAT I WAS
13 PRETTY -- YOU KNOW, I HAD FROZEN FEET ALREADY THEN. AND
14 I THINK THAT HE WAS SORT OF ENCOURAGING ME ON, I THINK.
15 YOU KNOW, I MENTIONED IN THE EARLIER INTERVIEW THAT MY
16 FEET WERE SWOLLEN; I COULDN'T GET MY SHOES ON. AND IT
17 WAS HARD. NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I THINK THAT HE WAS
18 SORT OF URGING ME ON. UH-HUH, I THINK SO, NOW THAT YOU
19 MENTION IT.

20 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER BEING AWARE OF THE GUARDS
21 AND OF THEIR SORT OF MENACING PRESENCE WHILE YOU WERE
22 BEING DRIVEN THROUGH THE SNOW?

23 A. EVERY SECOND, JUST RIGHT THERE.

24 Q. HOW DID YOU KIND OF KEEP OUT OF THEIR
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LANGER-52

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HARM'S WAY?

A. YOU KNOW, ACTUALLY, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I REMEMBER NOW THERE WERE USUALLY OLD MEN WHO WERE NOT -- YOU KNOW, CLOSE TO 60. AND I REMEMBER ONE OF THEM COULDN'T EVEN CARRY HIS RIFLE. ONE OF THE PRISONERS WAS CARRYING THEIR RIFLE FOR HIM, AN OLD MAN, YOU KNOW.

HONEST, I REMEMBER THAT. I'M SURE I'M NOT MAKING IT UP. I'M NOT. I THINK THAT HE WAS JUST AN OLD -- HE COULD HARDLY WALK HIMSELF. THEY WERE NOT THE SS. THEY WERE JUST -- IT WAS RIGHT AT THE END; JUST OLD, OLD MEN WHO COULDN'T -- WHO WERE NOT SENT TO WAR ANYMORE.

IT WAS JUST THEY WERE RIGHT THERE WITH YOU WALKING. I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY SLEPT. WE SLEPT IN BARN. MAYBE THEY SLEPT IN THE FARMER'S HOUSE, BECAUSE USUALLY WE ENDED UP IN A BARN FOR THE NIGHT TRYING TO COVER US WITH STRAW.

AND I KNOW THAT SOME PEOPLE TRIED TO HIDE IN THE STRAW AND THEN THE GERMANS WOULD -- WITH PICKS, YOU KNOW, THEY WOULD GO THROUGH THE STRAW AND SEE IF ANYBODY WAS HIDING THERE. SO WE -- AS I SAID, WE NEVER CONTEMPLATED TO ESCAPE BECAUSE WE THOUGHT IT MAY BE A FUTILE ATTEMPT. IN MOST CASES IT WAS. I KNOW OF PEOPLE WHO DID AND DIDN'T MAKE IT.

LANGER-53

1
2 Q. SO YOUR STOP ON THIS -- YOUR TERMINAL STOP
3 ON THIS PARTICULAR MARCH, THIS GROSSROSEN --

4 A. GROSSROSEN. AND THEN I HAVE DESCRIBED
5 EXPERIENCE WITH MY FROZEN FEET IN A PREVIOUS INTERVIEW.
6 IF YOU SAW THE TAPE, YOU'VE SEEN IT. THAT I PERHAPS
7 REMEMBER MORE THAN THE EARLIER TIMES IN CAMP; THAT AND
8 BUCHENWALD, AND HOW THE -- FROM THERE WE WENT BY --
9 AGAIN BY A CATTLE TRAIN TO BUCHENWALD. THAT WAS ALREADY
10 IN FEBRUARY. THAT WAS JUST A COUPLE MONTHS BEFORE THE
11 END OF THE WAR.

12 I REMEMBER HOW THE SHOOTING BECAME LOUDER
13 AND LOUDER SO WE KNEW THAT THE AMERICANS ARE COMING.
14 AND I REMEMBER THEM COMING UP THE HILL, THE TANKS. I
15 REMEMBER THAT.

16 AND THEN APRIL 11, WEDNESDAY, FOUR O'CLOCK
17 IN THE AFTERNOON, I REMEMBER THAT TOO, THAT DAY.
18 SOMETIMES I REMEMBER IT. I SAY, "OH, GOSH, IT WAS THE
19 11TH OF APRIL, I FORGOT ABOUT THAT." BUT I REMEMBER
20 THAT DAY VERY WELL.

21 Q. HOW MANY OF YOU WERE THERE WHEN YOU GOT TO
22 GROSSROSEN?

23 A. IS YOUR QUESTION HOW MANY PEOPLE SURVIVED
24 THE MARCH? I THINK IT WAS 4,000 THAT WAS IN THAT CAMP,
25 AND MAYBE ABOUT 1,500, I BELIEVE, SURVIVED THE MARCH. I

LANGER-54

1 THINK I'M PROBABLY FAIRLY ACCURATE ON THAT. NOT MANY.

2 Q. AND YOU WERE THERE, SAY, ABOUT FIVE WEEKS?

3 A. IN GROSSROSEN? DAYS.

4 Q. DAYS?

5 A. MAYBE A COUPLE WEEKS. MAYBE WEEKS, MAYBE A
6 COUPLE WEEKS BEFORE THEY SHIPPED US ON TO BUCHENWALD.

7 Q. WHAT DID YOU DO WHILE YOU WERE THERE?

8 A. WELL, OVERALL I COULDN'T MOVE. I COULDN'T
9 WALK. I HAD FROZEN FEET. I MEAN, I JUST DIDN'T DO
10 ANYTHING; JUST VEGETATED. I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.
11 NOBODY DID ANYTHING ANYHOW. THERE WAS NO WORK. WE
12 JUST --

13 Q. DID YOU HAVE REGULAR MEALTIMES OR ANY
14 SCHEDULE?

15 A. NOTHING.

16 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

17 Q. BY THAT TIME YOU HAD SEEN THE WAY PEOPLE
18 WHO FELL SICK WERE TREATED. AND YOU NOW HAD FROZEN
19 FEET. WERE YOU NOT THEN CONCERNED THAT THAT WAS GOING
20 TO PUT YOU IN THAT POSITION OF --

21 A. THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION. NO, I THINK THAT
22 PROBABLY THEN I DIDN'T HAVE ANY OPEN SORES, YOU SEE. I
23 JUST HAD NO SHOES AND NO SOCKS. AND I MENTIONED IN THE
24 EARLIER INTERVIEW THAT MY BROTHER TRIED TO TAKE SHOES
25

LANGER-55

1
2 OFF A DEAD PRISONER AND TRIED TO GET ME SHOES.

3 AS I HAVE SAID SO MANY TIMES TODAY, I NEVER
4 THOUGHT THAT I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT. I GOT GANGRENE,
5 YOU KNOW, WHEN I GOT TO BUCHENWALD, BUT THEN I WAS IN
6 SOME SORT OF A CAMP HOSPITAL. AND I REMEMBER WHEN THE
7 WAR WAS OVER I COULD BARELY WALK. I KNOW SOMEBODY FROM
8 MY HOMETOWN WAS IN THE SAME CAMP. I KNOW I WAS WALKING
9 ON HIS ARM, AND HE TRIED TO GET ME SOME SHOES AND HE
10 WAS -- IT WAS SOMEWHAT HEALED.

11 MY CASE OF FROSTBITE WAS NOT TERRIBLY BAD,
12 YOU KNOW. I MEAN I HAD OPEN SORES, BUT PEOPLE DIED, YOU
13 KNOW. IF YOU FROZE, PEOPLE DIED BECAUSE OF DIARRHEA,
14 WHICH I DID NOT HAVE. YOU SEE, I DID NOT HAVE THAT,
15 DIARRHEA. AND I HAD THE SAME AMOUNT OF FOOD AND, YOU
16 KNOW, I NEVER -- MAYBE I HAD A GOOD CONSTITUTION; IT HAD
17 SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT. I DON'T KNOW.

18 BY MS. BACKOVER:

19 Q. HOW BIG WERE YOU THEN?

20 A. VERY SMALL. VERY SMALL. I -- THEY WERE
21 VERY CONCERNED AFTER I CAME BACK AFTER THE WAR. I
22 DIDN'T GROW. MY BROTHER WAS CLOSE TO SIX FEET, THOUGH
23 BOTH OF MY PARENTS WERE SHORT. BUT I WAS VERY SMALL.
24 THEY WERE VERY CONCERNED BECAUSE I WAS VERY SMALL. BUT
25 I WAS VERY SMALL.

LANGER-56

1
2 I WAS VERY CONCERNED BEING VERY SMALL, AND
3 I HAVE SOMEWHAT CAUGHT UP AND I GREW QUITE A BIT AFTER
4 THE WAR. BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT FOOD AT THE TIME
5 WHEN YOU -- YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU GROW AT THE AGE OF 13,
6 14, 15. I WAS RATHER SMALL, I THOUGHT, FOR MY AGE. I
7 WISH I WOULD HAVE GROWN ANOTHER TWO INCHES (INAUDIBLE).
8 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

9 Q. DO YOU NOT HOLD PEOPLE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA
10 RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENED, PERHAPS A QUESTION OF
11 INACTION?

12 A. WELL, NO. YOU KNOW, THIS IS WHAT I THOUGHT
13 OF THE SABRAS IN ISRAEL. THEY BLAME THE JEWS FOR
14 INACTION. IT WAS -- NO, NO, IT ACTUALLY NEVER HAS
15 CROSSED MY MIND THAT -- WERE THERE SOME PEOPLE
16 COLLABORATING WITH THE GERMANS? YES. BUT THEY WERE, TO
17 A CERTAIN DEGREE, ALSO VICTIMS OF THE GERMAN FASCISTIC
18 REGIME.

19 NO, THE ANSWER IS NO. I MEAN, WE WERE ALL
20 RESPONSIBLE. OUR PARENTS, YOU KNOW, NOT DOING ANYTHING,
21 YOU KNOW, NO -- A LOT OF THE ISRAELI SABRAS SAID, "WHY
22 DID YOU GO IN LIKE SHEEP TO GAS CHAMBERS? "WHY DIDN'T
23 YOU DO SOMETHING?" GOOD QUESTION. NO, NO, WE DIDN'T.
24 I DIDN'T, AT LEAST.

25 //

LANGER-57

1
2 Q. DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE BACK IN YOUR
3 HOMETOWN, YOUR OLD HOMETOWN?

4 A. I DON'T, BUT IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MY
5 WARTIME EXPERIENCES. IT'S JUST WHAT COMMUNISM HAS DONE
6 TO THE COUNTRY AND TO THE TOWN IS JUST SOMETHING THAT
7 MAKES ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. BUT IT'S NOT ANYTHING DUE
8 TO THE WAR EXPERIENCE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE REFERRING
9 TO.

10 FIRST TIME COMING THERE AFTER 20 YEARS,
11 WHEN I WENT BACK I REALLY ENJOYED BEING THERE BECAUSE IT
12 BROUGHT ME BACK TO MY CHILDHOOD. I ALWAYS TRIED TO
13 RECAPTURE MY CHILDHOOD, BUT SOMETIMES I'M TRYING TO DO
14 IT NOW. THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS I'VE GONE BACK SO
15 OFTEN. BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN, I'M AFRAID.

16 Q. YOU DON'T FEEL THE THREAT OF RESURGENT
17 ANTI-SEMITISM THAT SEEMS TO BE PRESENT ELSEWHERE?

18 A. I DON'T THINK IT'S THE CASE TO A DEGREE IN
19 CZECHOSLOVAKIA. I THINK IT WAS ALWAYS DIFFERENT IN THAT
20 COUNTRY. I THINK THAT THE JEWS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ALWAYS
21 ENJOYED A BETTER LIFE THAN IN ROMANIA AND POLAND.

22 IN FACT, EVEN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT,
23 IT'S -- NO, NO, NO, I DIDN'T, NOT AT ALL. AND I HAVE
24 ASKED THEM. PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, THE JEWISH PEOPLE THAT
25 LIVE THERE, NO, I DIDN'T -- I DIDN'T FEEL ANYTHING.

LANGER-58

1
2 IN FACT, SOME OF THE PEOPLE ON -- LIKE THE
3 DAUGHTER OF A FORMER EMPLOYEE OF MY FATHER, SHE INVITED
4 ME TO DINNER JUST A MONTH AGO. AND SHE SAID, "YOU KNOW,
5 THERE MUST BE SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN THE GENES OF YOU
6 JEWISH PEOPLE BECAUSE LOOK HOW WELL, YOU ARE DOING, YOU
7 KNOW, AND YOU LIVE WELL AND YOU" -- AND I SAID TO HER
8 THAT SHE HAS FORGOTTEN, BUT THERE WERE A LOT OF POOR
9 JEWS IN MY HOMETOWN.

10 BUT THAT'S HOW SOME PEOPLE VIEW IT, THAT
11 THE JEWS HAVE SOMETHING THAT THE OTHERS DON'T HAVE. I
12 DON'T KNOW. I'VE HEARD IT FROM OTHER PEOPLE.

13 BY MS. BACKOVER:

14 Q. WAS THERE THIS DISTINCTION IN
15 CZECHOSLOVAKIA, EITHER THEN OR NOW, THAT -- I KNOW THERE
16 WAS, FOR INSTANCE, IN POLAND. POLAND YOU ARE EITHER A
17 JEW OR YOU'RE A POLE, BUT YOU'RE NOT A JEWISH-POLE. IN
18 CZECHOSLOVAKIA --

19 A. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A CZECH-JEW.
20 THERE IS. I MEAN, THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE MORE
21 ASSIMILATED THAN OTHERS, BUT THERE WAS DIFFERENT. I
22 THINK IT'S PERHAPS DUE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF MASARYK. I
23 DON'T KNOW IF YOU KNOW; HE WAS THE GEORGE WASHINGTON OF
24 CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WHO WAS VERY SYMPATHETIC TOWARDS THE
25 JEWS.

LANGER-59

1
2 JEWES WERE VERY ACTIVE ON MANY LEVELS. WAS
3 THERE ANTI-SEMITISM? OF COURSE THERE WAS ANTI-SEMITISM,
4 I'M SURE. WAS I AWARE OF IT WHEN I WENT BACK? HUH-UH.
5 ON THE CONTRARY, PEOPLE WERE VERY RESPECTFUL OF THE FACT
6 THAT I -- AFTER BEING GONE SINCE, WHAT, '44, 42 YEARS --
7 THAT I SPEAK THE LANGUAGE SO WELL, AND THEY REALLY
8 APPRECIATED IT.

9 I HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED ANY PERSONALLY. I
10 DIDN'T FEEL IT; NOR WAS I PREOCCUPIED WITH IT. NO, IT'S
11 TOTALLY DIFFERENT IN ROMANIA AND POLAND; TOTALLY. I
12 MEAN, DISTINCTLY SO. AND I'M SURE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE
13 PROBABLY WOULD TELL YOU THE SAME THING.

14 Q. WHEN YOU FIRST GOT BACK AFTER --

15 A. '45.

16 Q. YES, AFTER BUCHENWALD WAS LIBERATED AND YOU
17 WENT ON WITH, AS I UNDERSTAND, SOME CZECH PARTISANS?

18 A. WELL, YES, SORT OF FREEDOM-FIGHTERS OF
19 THOSE DAYS, YES.

20 Q. WHAT WAS IT LIKE --

21 A. TO GO BACK?

22 Q. -- ROLLING INTO TOWNS --

23 A. I REMEMBER IT WAS -- YOU KNOW, IT WAS -- I
24 DON'T KNOW HOW I WAS EXPERIENCING THE FREEDOM THEN.
25 OBVIOUSLY WE WERE HAPPY THAT WE WERE FREE. I WAS

LANGER-60

1
2 PREOCCUPIED JUST TO GO BACK HOME. I JUST WANTED TO GO
3 BACK HOME. I MENTIONED THAT MY BROTHER WANTED TO STAY
4 IN PRAGUE FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND I JUST WOULDN'T. HE
5 SAID, "COME ON, LET'S STAY IN PRAGUE." I SAID, "HUH-UH,
6 I WANT TO GO HOME."

7 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

8 Q. YOU DID NOT KNOW WHERE YOUR PARENTS WERE AT
9 THIS MOMENT?

10 A. I DID KNOW THAT MY MOTHER -- WELL, I KNEW
11 THAT MY -- WELL, I ASSUMED THAT MY FATHER WASN'T ALIVE
12 BECAUSE HE DID NOT MAKE IT -- YOU KNOW, HE DID NOT MAKE
13 IT ON THE DEATH MARCH. WE KNEW THAT MY MOTHER WAS IN
14 BERGEN-BELSEN AND THAT SHE WAS ILL WITH TYPHOID FEVER
15 AND WE -- SHE CAME BACK ABOUT A MONTH AFTER WE DID.

16 Q. HOW DID YOU GET HOME?

17 A. WELL, WE WENT FROM BUCHENWALD TO PRAGUE.
18 WE WENT BY -- TO PILSNER WE WENT BY A TRUCK; THEN WE
19 WENT BY TRAIN TO PRAGUE AND THEN BY TRAIN AND THEN WE
20 COULDN'T GO ALL THE WAY. YOU KNOW, THE BRIDGES WERE
21 BLOWN UP, SO WE WENT BY TRUCK.

22 AT ONE TIME WHEN WE CAME TO THE SECOND
23 BIGGEST CITY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA -- IT'S BRNO, B-R-N-O --
24 THE TRAIN COULDN'T GO ALL THE WAY TO TOWN. WE WERE --
25 IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT.

LANGER-61

1
2 THEY JUST DROPPED US OFF IN SOME SMALL TOWN. AND I KNOW
3 WE TOOK A CART. YOU HAD THE CART AT THE RAILROAD FOR
4 YOUR LUGGAGE. WE GOT THAT. AND ON THE ROAD -- WE HAD
5 NO LUGGAGE. WE JUST HAD SOME OLD SS BLANKETS AND JUST
6 MAYBE SOME -- JUST COUPLE CLOTHES. WE HAD MAYBE A BAG
7 THIS BIG, BUT WE COULDN'T CARRY IT. SO WE WERE ROLLING
8 ON THE ROAD LATE AT NIGHT. WE ARRIVED IN BRNO IN THE
9 TOWN. I WAS IN THE TOWN NOW, TOO.

10 IN FACT, I REMEMBER THAT BECAUSE I JUST
11 WALKED BY THE HOTEL. I SLEPT ON THE COUNTER. THERE WAS
12 NO, YOU KNOW -- THERE WAS 45 COWS, YOU KNOW. PEOPLE
13 WERE JUST COMING AND GOING. AND THEN THE NEXT DAY WE
14 TOOK A TRAIN. DIDN'T PAY ANY MONEY; WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY
15 MONEY. WE JUST GOT ON A TRAIN AND WENT.

16 BY MS. BACKOVER:

17 Q. WHAT WERE YOU DOING FOR FOOD AT THIS POINT,
18 WATER?

19 A. I THINK WE JUST WENT TO -- PEOPLE JUST GAVE
20 US FOOD, I THINK. I MEAN, WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY.
21 THERE WERE, YOU KNOW, SOME CENTERS WHERE PEOPLE WHO WERE
22 RETURNING PRISONERS AND PEOPLE WHO WERE AT WORK IN
23 GERMANY -- I KNOW WE DIDN'T -- WE DIDN'T STARVE.

24 I REMEMBER WE WENT TO THE LITTLE TOWN, THE
25 LITTLE VILLAGE WHERE MY MOTHER CAME FROM. PEOPLE GAVE

1 US FOOD, YOU KNOW. WE TOLD THEM WHO WE ARE. THEY GAVE
2 US BACON AND ALL KINDS OF THINGS.

3 SOMETHING ELSE WE COULDN'T EAT; WE COULDN'T
4 EAT ANY GREASY FOOD. YOU KNOW, A LOT OF PEOPLE DID, AND
5 AS I MENTIONED, PEOPLE ATE THE GREASY FOOD AND THAT JUST
6 KILLED THEM.

7 THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME SORT OF A
8 SELF-PRESERVATION IN ME AND MY BROTHER. WE JUST REALLY
9 CAME THROUGH THE WAR PRETTY WELL HEALTHWISE.

10 Q. HOW WERE YOU FEELING HEALTHWISE BY THE TIME
11 YOU GOT BACK TO YOUR --

12 A. PRETTY GOOD. ONE THING I WAS FEELING FOR
13 MANY, MANY YEARS, I SORT OF FELT A LITTLE BIT SORRY FOR
14 MYSELF. WHEN I SHOOK IT, YOU KNOW, I TOLD YOU THEN I
15 STARTED MY BUSINESS AND EVERYTHING. BUT FOR MANY YEARS
16 I THOUGHT THAT SOMEBODY OWES ME SOMETHING FOR WHAT I'VE
17 GONE THROUGH, FOR MANY, MANY YEARS; MANY YEARS. THAT'S
18 WHAT PROBABLY HELPED ME BACK JUST -- JUST GO FORWARD. I
19 COULD NEVER FORGET, YOU KNOW, WHY DID WE GO THROUGH
20 THIS? WHY? WHAT DID WE DO?

21 I KNOW YOU HAVE ASKED FOR FEELINGS AND I'M
22 SORRY I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY. I JUST DON'T WANT TO MAKE
23 UP ANYTHING. IT WOULDN'T SOUND RIGHT.

24 Q. WHAT WAS YOUR RECEPTION LIKE WHEN YOU GOT
25 BACK HOME?

LANGER-63

1
2 A. YOU KNOW, A LOT OF PEOPLE, THE CZECH
3 NON-JEWISH POPULATION -- I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY -- YOU
4 KNOW, YOU'RE BACK, SURPRISED. AND THEY WERE, TO A
5 CERTAIN DEGREE, VICTIMS THEMSELVES. I KNOW THEY DIDN'T
6 GO THROUGH ANYTHING LIKE WE DID. THEY KEPT THEIR HOMES.
7 WE WERE FAIRLY WELL RECEIVED, I THOUGHT. WE GOT -- YOU
8 KNOW, WE GOT FREE FOOD. AND THERE WAS NO FOOD -- I
9 MEAN, WE GOT SOME JAM AND BREAD. WE GOT SOME SPECIAL
10 TREATMENT WHEN WE CAME BACK JUST FOR THE FIRST FEW WEEKS
11 JUST TO GET GOING

12 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

13 Q. WHERE DID YOU LIVE? WHERE WAS YOUR FAMILY
14 HOUSE?

15 A. OUR FAMILY HOUSE WAS RUINED BY THE
16 RUSSIANS. THE RUSSIANS AND THE HASIDIM, I LIKE THEM THE
17 SAME WAY. RUINED OUR HOUSE, JUST -- THEY WERE JUST
18 DEFECATING RIGHT IN THE -- RIGHT IN THERE. TERRIBLE.
19 SO IT TOOK A WHILE BEFORE THEY MOVED OUT BEFORE WE COULD
20 GET OUR HOUSE BACK, THE HOUSE THAT THE GERMANS EVICTED
21 US FROM.

22 WHEN I SAY "RUSSIANS," I MEAN THE SOVIETS.
23 THAT'S WHAT I MEANT.

24 Q. THEY WERE IN POSSESSION OF THE HOUSE?

25 A. THE PART OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKIA THAT I COME

LANGER-64

1 FROM WAS LIBERATED, IF YOU WILL, BY THE SOVIET ARMY.
2

3 Q. HOW LONG DID YOU STAY THERE?

4 A. I CAME BACK MAY 1945 AND I LEFT IN 1947,
5 OCTOBER. I WENT TO ENGLAND AND I JUST -- THAT WAS STILL
6 BEFORE THE COMMUNIST (SOUNDS LIKE POOCH). I WENT TO
7 ENGLAND AND HAVE NOT RETURNED TO LIVE THERE SINCE THEN.
8 I'VE BEEN GONE SINCE '47; A WANDERING JEW.

9 BY MS. BACKOVER:

10 Q. YOUR MOTHER JOINED YOUR BROTHER AND
11 YOURSELF WHEN?

12 A. I WENT TO ENGLAND IN 1947. MY MOTHER FELT
13 THAT SHE WANTS ME OUT INTO THE WORLD. SO IN '48,
14 FEBRUARY '48, THERE WAS A COMMUNIST UPRISE IN
15 CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE COMMUNISTS TOOK OVER THE
16 GOVERNMENT, AND I GOT THE MESSAGE "DO NOT COME BACK."
17 SO I STAYED IN ENGLAND.

18 AT THE TIME THE THEN-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT
19 IN THE EARLY FORTIES WAS SOMEWHAT SYMPATHETIC TOWARDS
20 ISRAEL. AND I AM TOLD THE PURPOSE WAS THAT THEY WERE
21 THINKING THAT IF THEY WERE TRAINED, SOME OF THE
22 SURVIVING JEWS WHO LIVED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AND SENT
23 THEM TO ISRAEL, THAT ISRAEL WAS GOING TO BECOME A
24 COMMUNIST COUNTRY. THAT WAS THE SCHEME.

25 SO MY BROTHER TRAINED -- YOU KNOW, THEY

LANGER-65

MADE -- THEY FACILITATED ALL THE JEWS, THEY TRAINED THEM, WHATEVER, IN THE ARMY. HE TRAINED TO BE A PILOT.

SO THEN HE AND MY MOTHER LEFT FOR ISRAEL IN 1949. THEY WERE -- THEY LET THEM GO. AND I THEN LEFT ENGLAND IN '48, AND I VOLUNTEERED IN ENGLAND TO THE ISRAELI ARMY. AND CLANDESTINELY I REMEMBER I HAD TO COME TO FRANCE AND REPORTED TO ONE OFFICE, AND THEY SENT ME ON TO MARSEILLES. AND I SERVED IN THE ISRAELI ARMY TWO YEARS THEN; '49 I CAME VERY CLOSE TO WHEN THEY ARRIVED, STAYED THERE FOUR YEARS AND WENT BACK TO ENGLAND, CANADA, BACK HERE, THEN HERE.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAY YOUR MOTHER ARRIVED BACK FROM BELSEN?

A. VERY WELL, AS A MATTER OF FACT. SHE -- WE KNEW SHE WAS COMING. I DON'T KNOW HOW; IF THERE WAS A PHONE OR HOW WE KNEW THAT. AND THE TRAIN DID NOT COME ALL THE WAY TO -- THE TRAIN DID NOT COME ALL THE WAY TO OUR TOWN. A FEW VILLAGES BEFORE IT CAME TO OUR TOWN THE BRIDGES WERE NOT COMPLETED, AND I -- WHEN I WAS THERE, NOW I CROSS THAT RAILROAD CROSSING MANY TIMES. I REMEMBER WHEN THE TRAIN STOPPED.

IN FACT, SOMEBODY TRAVELED IN MY CAR. I SAID IN 1945 WHEN MY MOTHER CAME, THAT'S WHERE SHE GOT OUT AND I HIRED A TAXI AND WENT TO MEET HER THERE. AND

LANGER-66

1
2 WHENEVER I -- I CAN SEE THE RAILROAD CROSSING RIGHT
3 THERE WHEN THE TRAIN STOPPED. SO THAT'S WHEN I PICKED
4 HER UP.

5 AND THEN MAY '45 SHE WAS -- NO HAIR. SHE
6 HAD THIS TYPHUS INFECTION IN GERMANY AND SHE WAS SKIN
7 AND BONES. SHE WAS IN A COMA FOR THREE WEEKS, BUT SHE
8 PULLED THROUGH IT FAIRLY QUICKLY TOO.

9 WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AFTER THE WAR WHEN OUR
10 FOOD GOT BETTER, YOU KNOW, THE SYSTEM COULDN'T HANDLE
11 IT. SO WE JUST BLEW UP; YOU KNOW, I LOOKED, LIKE,
12 SWOLLEN. MY HEAD WAS LIKE -- IT WAS ALL PUFFY. AND I
13 MEAN THAT HAPPENED BECAUSE OF, YOU KNOW, THE CHANGE OF
14 DIET.

15 MY HAIR WAS VERY SHORT BECAUSE WE HAD NO
16 HAIR, SO I LOOKED LIKE I HAD LIKE A CREWCUT; YOU KNOW,
17 STILL HAD SHORT HAIR. IT START GROWING AND MY HEAD WAS
18 LIKE THIS (INDICATING), JUST ALL PUFFY. ANYWAY, THAT'S
19 NOT THE CASE ANYMORE NOW.

20 MR. KIRSCHMAN: (INAUDIBLE)?

21 A. YOU KNOW IT.

22 BY MS. BACKOVER:

23 Q. WAS THERE ANY MEDICAL CARE TO BE HAD THEN?

24 A. OH, YEAH. I REMEMBER I'VE GONE TO THE
25 HOSPITAL -- YOU MEAN CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

LANGER-67

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Q. YES.

A. OH, YES, VERY MUCH SO. I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL FOR MY FROZEN FEET AND ALL WERE TAKEN CARE OF. YEAH, WE WERE -- WE HAD NO PROBLEM. I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY MOTHER GOT MONEY -- SOMETHING HAPPENED.

(LIGHTS DIMMED IN INTERVIEW ROOM)

MR. KIRSCHNER: IT'S OKAY. JUST CONTINUE.

A. OKAY. YEAH, WE WERE NOT -- WE HAD FOOD AND WE HAD EVERYTHING.

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. SO YOU WEREN'T OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE EDEMA, THE SWELLING AND SO FORTH?

A. NO, NO. IT WAS VERY TEMPORARY. BUT I REMEMBER THAT IT HAPPENED. IN FACT, I HAVE SOME PICTURES. IT WAS -- MAYBE JUST HAPPENED TO ME. I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T KNOW IF EVERYBODY WAS LIKE THAT. BUT I REMEMBER THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AFTER THE WAR.

BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

Q. HOW DID YOU -- HOW DID THE FAMILY EARN ITS LIVING FOR THE -- IF MY ARITHMETIC WAS CORRECT -- CLOSE TO TWO YEARS AFTER THE WAR BACK IN YOUR HOMETOWN? THE LUMBAR YARD WAS GONE?

A. YEAH. I DON'T KNOW IF THERE WAS ANY MONEY. YEAH, I DON'T KNOW IF THERE WAS ANY MONEY THAT -- MY

LANGER-68

1
2 MOTHER HAD MONEY. WHETHER THE GERMANS CONFISCATED IT,
3 IF WE GOT IT BACK, I DON'T KNOW. BUT I -- WE DIDN'T
4 STARVE. I MEAN, THAT WAS NOT MY PREOCCUPATION.

5 I KNOW MY MOTHER STARTED TO -- MADE AN
6 ATTEMPT TO START THE BUSINESS AGAIN, BUT THAT DID NOT
7 WORK. THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH -- IT JUST -- SHE MADE A
8 SHORT ATTEMPT AT IT AND THEN JUST GAVE UP ON IT.

9 I DON'T KNOW. THERE WAS SOME -- WE HAD
10 SOME LAND. MAYBE SHE SOLD THAT. SEE, WE GOT PROPERTY
11 BACK AND SHE WAS ABLE TO SEND ME TO ENGLAND, AND THEN
12 SHE SOLD THE LAND WHERE MY FATHER'S BUSINESS WAS. SO WE
13 WERE NOT HURTING. I DON'T THINK SO. AT LEAST I'M NOT
14 AWARE OF IT.

15 BY MS. BACKOVER:

16 Q. DID A TIME COME WHEN YOU WENT AROUND YOUR
17 HOMETOWN AND WENT TO SEE WHO ELSE CAME BACK?

18 A. SMALL TOWN, SO IT WAS NOT -- IN FACT, AT
19 FIRST WE ALL -- YOU KNOW, WE LIVED IN ALL ONE HOUSE, SO
20 WHOEVER CAME BACK LIVED IN THAT HOUSE. SO WE KNEW WHO
21 WAS COMING BACK.

22 YOU KNOW, NOT MANY CAME; NOT MANY. I DON'T
23 KNOW IF 20 PEOPLE CAME BACK. SO IT WASN'T VERY
24 DIFFICULT TO KNOW.

25 AND THEN I THINK THAT THE PEOPLE TRIED TO

LANGER-69

1
2 LEAD AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE A NORMAL LIFE. YOU KNOW, I
3 WENT BACK TO SCHOOL AND WE ALL TRIED TO JUST NORMALIZE
4 OUR LIVES AND LEAVE THE WAR BEHIND US. IT WAS EASIER
5 FOR SOME, HARDER FOR OTHERS. BUT IT WENT FAIRLY
6 QUICKLY.

7 Q. ABOUT HOW DO YOU THINK IT WAS FOR YOU? WAS
8 IT EASY, SOMEWHAT MORE DIFFICULT?

9 A. WELL, AGAIN, YOU KNOW, I WAS NOT A VERY
10 GOOD STUDENT. AND I HAD TO GO -- I WENT BACK TO SCHOOL
11 AND I WENT WITH PEOPLE WHO WERE TWO OR THREE YEARS
12 YOUNGER THAN MYSELF AT THE TIME THAT I HAVE -- I MISSED
13 MORE THAN THAT, BUT I WAS ABLE TO, YOU KNOW, GO. I WAS
14 TWO OR THREE YEARS OLDER, PROBABLY THREE YEARS OLDER
15 THAN THE PEOPLE I WENT TO SCHOOL WITH. AND IT WAS
16 TERRIBLY EMBARRASSING, I REMEMBER THAT. I'VE GOT -- I
17 HAVE A 13-YEAR-OLD. THEY WOULDN'T EVEN TALK TO ANYBODY
18 IN THE NEXT GRADE HERE. SO IT WAS TERRIBLY EMBARRASSING
19 FOR ME.

20 YOU KNOW, I SAY, "GOD, I HAVE SURVIVED
21 BUCHENWALD." I HAVE TO GO -- BUT I WENT BACK TO SCHOOL
22 AND DIDN'T DO VERY WELL THERE EITHER. I JUST -- I KNOW
23 MY MOTHER WAS ALWAYS VERY UNHAPPY WITH ME THAT I WASN'T
24 A VERY GOOD STUDENT. I MADE UP FOR IT, THOUGH.

25 Q. DO YOU REMEMBER BEING ASKED QUESTIONS BY

LANGER-70

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THESE YOUNGER CLASSMATES, LIKE "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?"

A. HUH-UH.

Q. -- "WHY ARE YOU WITH US"?

A. I HAVE -- WELL, THEY KNEW THAT. YOU KNOW, IT'S VERY, YOU KNOW, SMALL; 7,000 PEOPLE, ONE SCHOOL, WITH NO MYSTERY. I MEAN, THAT WAS NOT -- YOU KNOW, THEY KNEW WHY I WAS THERE AND WHO I WAS. YEAH, THAT WAS -- IT WAS -- YOU KNOW, I TRIED TO FIND MYSELF. MY MOTHER WAS TRYING TO HELP ME TO FIND MYSELF.

IT WAS -- THEY WERE HARD TIMES FOR A 15-, 16-YEAR-OLD. YOU KNOW, MY DAUGHTER IS 16. SHE DRIVES A CAR. I WASN'T ALLOWED TO GO IN THE STREET WHEN I WAS 16. YOU COULDN'T GO TO A MOVIE AT NIGHT, YOU KNOW, A 16-YEAR-OLD. I TELL THEM THAT ALL THE TIME BUT THEY DON'T LISTEN TO ME. (LAUGHTER)
BY MR. KIRSCHMAN:

Q. HOW DOES THAT WORK, TELLING THEM ALL THE TIME?

A. NOT VERY WELL. 16, DRIVING A CAR. I MEAN, I WAS HONESTLY -- WE WERE NOT -- THOSE WERE THE RULES. YOU COULDN'T. YOU KNOW, TEACHER WOULD SEE YOU IN THE MOVIE AT NIGHT; YOU'RE JUST 16. NO.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED, HAVEN'T THEY?

BY MS. BACKOVER:

LANGER-71

1
2 Q. DID YOU TRY TO MAKE FRIENDS OR PARTICIPATE
3 IN SOCCER OR --

4 A. I TRIED TO JOIN THE BOY SCOUTS. YEAH, I
5 HAD SOME FRIENDS, UH-HUH. SEEMS TO ME THAT THOSE TWO
6 YEARS THAT I WAS IN THE TOWN PASSED VERY QUICKLY, AND
7 THEN I WAS ON TO ENGLAND AND LONDON AND JUST TRIED TO
8 MAKE AN EXISTENCE FOR MYSELF.

9 Q. IN THE BEGINNING OF TODAY'S INTERVIEW YOU
10 MENTIONED TALKING TO GERMANS AND ASKING THEM WHETHER
11 THEY -- WHETHER THEY HAD ANY IDEA OF HOW A COUNTRY LIKE
12 THAT, WITH THAT MUSIC, WITH THAT BACKGROUND, COULD HAVE
13 DONE THIS.

14 A. NO, WHAT I SAID, I WAS SAYING MYSELF. I
15 SAID -- NOT THAT I ASKED THEM. WELL, I MEAN I DID
16 CONFRONT SOME GERMANS. I HAD A GERMAN GIRLFRIEND AND I
17 JUST -- LOOK, A LOT OF THEM, PEOPLE SAID THEY WERE
18 YOUNG, AND I BELIEVED THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW. I MEAN I
19 BELIEVED THERE WERE GERMANS WHO DID NOT KNOW.

20 BUT NO, I WAS ASKING THIS QUESTION MYSELF:
21 HOW IS IT POSSIBLE, A COUNTRY LIKE THAT? I MEAN, WHAT
22 THEY HAVE DONE, YOU KNOW, WHAT THEY HAVE DONE SINCE THE
23 END OF THE WAR. I MEAN, IT'S A PLEASURE TO BE THERE,
24 AND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SO CAPABLE ARE ABLE TO DO THIS,
25 AND WHO ARE SO CULTURED. I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND IT,

LANGER-72

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HOW THEY FOLLOWED.

BUT I BELIEVED THAT, YOU KNOW, THAT WHAT HAS -- WHAT WAS EAST GERMANY, THAT NAZISM IS STILL THERE. IT'S PROBABLY TO A LESSER DEGREE IN WEST GERMANY, WHAT WAS WEST GERMANY. I THINK UNDER THE COMMUNIST PART OF GERMANY, UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME, IT WAS SORT OF NURTURED. AND IT'S VERY MUCH EVIDENT THERE; MUCH LESS IN WESTERN GERMANY.

I THINK THE JEWS ARE DOING VERY WELL IN WEST GERMANY, FROM WHAT I HAVE SEEN. AND I ASKED ABOUT THAT A LOT; YOU KNOW, HOW ARE PEOPLE DOING. AND I'VE SPENT THERE A WEEK, AND THEY'VE DONE VERY WELL FOR THEMSELVES, ACTUALLY. SOME BETTER THAN OTHERS; BUT SOME BECAME VERY WEALTHY, I UNDERSTAND. I DON'T KNOW HOW.

Q. HAVE YOU -- WHEN YOU WERE ASKING THE JEWS, HAVE YOU THEN, YOU KNOW, SORT OF TURNED AROUND AND ASKED A GERMAN, CONFRONTED ANY GERMANS TODAY AND --

A. NO, I -- WELL, I DID ENOUGH CONFRONTING. BUT NO, I DIDN'T HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY. I MEAN, I HAVE IN THE PAST, YOU KNOW. I MEAN, I WAS ON -- WHEN I WAS SINGLE I WAS ON A VACATION IN EUROPE AND I MET A GERMAN GIRL WHO ASKED ME TO COME BACK AND VISIT HER FAMILY, AND I DID A LOT OF THAT. THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF GUILT, TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF GUILT. TREMENDOUS AMOUNT.

LANGER-73

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Q. IN WHAT THEY SAID OR IN WHAT THEY DID?

A. WHAT THEY SAID, YOU KNOW. I MEAN, AND COLLECTIVE GUILT. EMBARRASSED, GUILTY. I MEAN, YOU KNOW, THAT'S JUST -- THAT THEY FELT BAD. THEY FELT BAD. AND I MADE SURE THAT THEY DID.

Q. WERE THEY ABLE TO OFFER ANY EXPLANATION, EXCUSE?

A. IS THERE ONE? NO. I WASN'T SEEKING ANY. IT WAS JUST I SAID, "WHY?" I MEAN, YOU KNOW, HOW COULD YOU DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

AND WHENEVER I GO THERE, I'M JUST AMAZED. JUST THE MINUTE -- YOU KNOW, I USED TO GO ON BUSINESS EVERY YEAR, ALWAYS THROUGH FRANKFURT. AND WHEN I SEE HOW THIS PLACE FUNCTIONS, I JUST -- WHY? WHY? NONE. I DON'T THINK THE QUESTION WILL EVER BE ANSWERED FOR MYSELF, YOU KNOW.

LOOK, I HAVE A FRIEND WHO ABSOLUTELY REFUSED COMPENSATION FROM THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT WHO LIVES IN MUNICH. HE'S A DOCENT IN DACHAU, SOMEBODY FROM MY HOMETOWN WHO MARRIED A GERMAN WOMAN AFTER THE WAR. AND ALL THE GERMANS WERE EVICTED FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER THE WAR. AND HE WENT WITH HIS WIFE AND SETTLED IN MUNICH IN '45, '46, '47, I REMEMBER. AND HE WAS LIBERATED IN DACHAU; LIVES TODAY IN MUNICH. AND HE

LANGER-74

IS -- HE IS A GUIDE. HE SPEAKS ENGLISH, GERMAN, POLISH.

AND HE REFUSED WHAT I CALL BLOOD MONEY. I GET IT. HE DIDN'T TAKE IT. WOULD NOT TAKE IT. LIVES RIGHT IN THAT COUNTRY. WOULD NOT TAKE THE MONEY FROM -- FOR HIS -- FOR TIME.

Q. DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?

A. INTELLECTUALLY, YEAH. LISTEN, THERE WERE PEOPLE IN ISRAEL TOOK A TREMENDOUS -- BILLIONS OF DOLLARS. YOU KNOW, AND -- WAS IT BEGIN WHO SAID HE WOULD NOT HAVE TAKEN IT FROM THE GERMANS? HE SAID, "WE DON'T WANT ANY BLOOD MONEY." YET BEN GURION ACCEPTED IT AND THAT'S WHAT REALLY HELPED ISRAEL. I MEAN BILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

I THINK THAT'S -- INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE TODAY WOULDN'T DRIVE A GERMAN CAR, WOULDN'T EVEN GO TO GERMANY. I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, I'VE TALKED TO -- I HAVE THESE FRIENDS WHO LIVE IN MUNICH, KIDS WERE BORN IN GERMANY, JEWISH CHILDREN, AND I ASKED THEM, AND THEY ALMOST FEEL GERMAN. AND MAYBE -- WHY SHOULDN'T THEY? I MEAN, YOU KNOW, MAYBE TIME COMES THAT YOU HAVE TO FORGIVE AND FORGET.

BUT I THINK, AS I SAID, I HAVE TO LEAVE IT TO THE NEXT GENERATIONS. I CAN'T DO IT.

Q. DO YOU HOPE THAT THEY, THESE NEXT

LANGER-75

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2 GENERATIONS, YOUR OWN CHILDREN, DO FORGIVE AND FORGET
3 OR --

4 A. I HOPE THEY CAN.

5 Q. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE --

6 A. I WOULD ENCOURAGE IT. I WOULD ENCOURAGE
7 IT.

8 Q. (INAUDIBLE)?

9 A. WELL, YOU KNOW, AS I HAVE TOLD RICHARD AND
10 DORIS AND I HAVE TOLD YOU ON THE PHONE, I USUALLY DON'T
11 BARE MY SOUL, AND I HAVE A DIFFICULTY WITH IT. I HAVE
12 ONLY AGREED, YOU KNOW, THAT MAYBE BY -- IF ANYBODY WILL
13 TAKE THE TROUBLE AND LISTEN TO WHAT LITTLE I HAD TO SAY
14 OF WHAT HAPPENED, THAT IT WOULD PREVENT IT HAPPENING
15 EVER IN THE FUTURE. AND I HOPE THAT I COULD FORGET AND
16 FORGIVE.

17 AND I HOPE THAT I COULD FORGET AND FORGIVE,
18 AND THIS IS WHAT I SAID. I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD
19 EVER -- AS MUCH AS I LIKE WHAT I SEE, YOU KNOW, IT'S --
20 YOU KNOW, I LIKE BEING IN EUROPE, BUT I COULD NEVER
21 BRING UP MY CHILDREN IN GERMANY. I WOULD NEVER WANT MY
22 CHILDREN TO SPEAK GERMAN. I COULD NEVER DO THAT.

23 NOW, IF THEY LIVED IN SWITZERLAND AND SPOKE
24 GERMAN, THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT. CRAZY, YOU KNOW, BUT
25 THAT'S HOW IT IS.

LANGER-76

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2 I MEAN EVEN AUSTRIA, I MEAN I LIKE -- WHEN
3 THE AUSTRIANS SPEAK GERMAN, ALTHOUGH THE AUSTRIANS WERE
4 BASTARDS AS MUCH AS -- MORE SO, YOU KNOW, EICHMANN AND
5 HITLER. THEY WERE AUSTRIANS AND THEY WERE POPULAR THAN
6 THE POPE.

7 BUT I -- I HOPE THAT PEOPLE CAN FORGIVE AND
8 FORGET. I LIKE TO HEAR -- WHEN I SEE THAT GERMAN-JEWS
9 GO TO ISRAEL AND SORT OF TRY TO GET INVOLVED, AND
10 SOMETIMES SOME DO IT OUT OF GUILT, I LIKE TO SEE IT. I
11 HOPE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION CAN DO IT. I HAVE DONE IT
12 AS MUCH AS I CAN. AND I THINK IT'S A GOOD THING IF
13 PEOPLE CAN FORGIVE AND FORGET.

14 IT'S NOT ONE OF MY CHARACTERISTICS,
15 UNFORTUNATELY. I'M LIKE AN ELEPHANT. IT'S -- I MEAN, I
16 LIKE TO SEE IT WHEN THE GERMAN -- YOU KNOW, WHEN THEY
17 LIVE IN GERMANY, YOU KNOW, THEY SHOULD FEEL THAT WAY. I
18 MEAN, THAT WOULD BE -- IT MAKES IT EASIER FOR THEIR LIFE
19 IF THEY LIVE IN A COUNTRY AND THEY FEEL PART OF IT.

20 I CAME HERE -- YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN HERE
21 SINCE '61 AND I DON'T FEEL PART OF IT, AND IT DOESN'T
22 MAKE IT ANY EASIER FOR ME. BUT IT'S ALL REMOTELY --
23 RELATES TO THE WARTIME EXPERIENCES. SOME PEOPLE CAN
24 COME HERE AND -- (SNAPS FINGERS). I COULDN'T DO IT.

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LANGER-77

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BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

Q. BUT YOU HAVE DONE VERY WELL.

A. WELL --

Q. YOU HAVE MUCH TO BE PROUD OF.

A. WELL, OF COURSE. YES, I HAVE. BUT IT'S JUST I HAVE NEVER -- THE UPROOTING THAT I HAVE -- THAT HAPPENED TO ME THROUGH THE WAR, I NEVER -- IT JUST IS ALWAYS THERE, ALWAYS THERE. SOME PEOPLE CAN HANDLE IT VERY WELL. I DIDN'T. I DIDN'T. I DON'T WANT TO GIVE AN IMPRESSION THAT I'M SUFFERING OR ANYTHING. YOU KNOW, I'M JUST BEING VERY OPEN AND HONEST. WHAT ELSE CAN I TELL YOU?

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. YOU SAID IN THE PREVIOUS INTERVIEW WHEN YOU TOLD ME OVER THE PHONE THAT ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS WHY YOU WERE DOING THIS WAS IN THE HOPE THAT SOMEDAY YOUR OWN CHILDREN, YOUR DAUGHTERS, WOULD COME TO KNOW YOUR STORY.

A. UH-HUH.

Q. HOW DO YOU THINK THAT MIGHT HAPPEN? WHEN DO YOU THINK THAT THEY MIGHT BECOME INTERESTED?

A. WELL, MY WIFE KEEPS ASSURING ME THAT WHEN THEY WILL BE OLD ENOUGH, THAT THEY WILL BE INTERESTED. SO I HOPE THEY WILL BE. AND AGAIN, YOU KNOW,

LANGER-78

INTELLECTUALLY PERHAPS UNDERSTAND, BECAUSE IT REALLY
MAKES ME DIFFERENT THAN ANY PARENT OF THEIR PEERS.

YOU KNOW, I AM AN OLDER FATHER, THOUGH I
DON'T FEEL IT. BUT THAT'S A REALITY. AND IN ALL
FAIRNESS TO THEM, PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT, I
GUESS. IT'S NOT -- IT SEPARATES ME, AND I -- IF I LOOK
AT IT RATIONALLY, IT HURTS NEVERTHELESS. BUT, YOU KNOW,
THEY JUST DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT. BUT I UNDERSTAND
IT INTELLECTUALLY.

YOU KNOW, NONE OF THE PARENTS HAVE WARTIME
EXPERIENCE, HAVE -- WHO HAVE BEEN IN A CAMP, HAVE THE
NUMBER ON THEIR HAND. IT'S SORT OF EMBARRASSING, AS
THEY SAY.

BUT I THINK THAT, YOU KNOW, IF I CAN DRAW
AN ANALOGY, I KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT CAME HERE WITH
FOREIGN PARENTS AND WERE EMBARRASSED TO SPEAK THEIR
LANGUAGE AND SUPRESSED IT, AND THEY WOULD SAY, "GOD, HOW
STUPID. WE COULD HAVE LEARNED ANOTHER LANGUAGE SO
EASILY."

SO I THINK THAT'S GOING TO HAVE THE SAME
SORT OF A DEVELOPMENT. I MEAN --

(END OF TAPE ONE.)

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. ALL RIGHT.

LANGER-79

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A. OKAY.

Q. YOU WERE GOING TO REFLECT DIFFERENCES, YOU SAID YOU JUST LEARNED RECENTLY THAT THERE WERE POST-WAR --

A. YEAH. WELL, IN THE INTERMISSION I ASKED YOU HOW YOU -- WHY YOU WERE INTERESTED, IF YOU WERE A DAUGHTER OF A SURVIVOR.

YEAH, YOU KNOW, A LOT OF POLISH JEWS DID NOT GO BACK AND STAYED IN D.P. CAMPS. I HAVE NO EXPERIENCE WITH IT AT ALL. I -- THE FACT THAT MY MOTHER WAS ALIVE MADE IT -- YOU KNOW, BROUGHT SOME SORT OF A NORMALCY TO MY LIFE AFTER THE WAR.

AND, IN FACT, A FELLOW WHO WAS MY BROTHER'S AGE, WHO WAS SIX YEARS OLDER THAN MYSELF, WHOSE PARENTS DID NOT SURVIVE, MOVED IN WITH US AND BECAME ONE OF US, AND HE'S THE ONE I JUST VISITED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. HE IS NOW 67.

AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT, NOW THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE GONE, HE IS TRYING TO RE-ESTABLISH HIS GREAT-GRANDPARENTS' BUSINESS THAT WAS FOUNDED IN 1849. AT THE AGE OF 67 STARTING TO TRY A BUSINESS. AND FORTUNATELY, HE HAS SOME KNOWLEDGE OF HOW BUSINESS WAS DONE UNDER FREE, NORMAL, CAPITALISTIC CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH THEY DON'T KNOW IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IT'S JUST A

LANGER-80

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STATE OF CHAOS.

THAT BOTHERED ME MORE, GOING TO MY TOWN,
SEEING HOW INEXPERIENCED PEOPLE ARE, HOW TERRIBLY HARMED
THEY WERE BY THE SOVIET REGIME. AND I DREW AN ANALOGY
THAT THE SOVIETS, THE COMMUNISTS, ACTUALLY OWE
REPARATION TO THESE PEOPLE, WHAT THEY HAVE DONE TO THEIR
LIVES, HOW THEY WERE -- SUBJUGATED THEM MORALLY,
MENTALLY. WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IS JUST -- WE'RE SO LUCKY
THAT I HAVE ESCAPED IT, THAT I WAS ABLE TO GET AWAY
AFTER THAT TERRIBLE -- I MEAN, I ALMOST DREW AN ANALOGY
WITH WHAT THE GERMANS HAVE DONE.

I DON'T KNOW WHICH WAS WORSE, EXCEPT THAT
COMMUNISM LASTED FORTY YEARS. GERMANS ONLY -- IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA LASTED ONLY FIVE YEARS. BUT COMING
BACK -- I JUST TRIED TO GET IT IN THERE.

YEAH, I HAVE NEVER -- I WAS SURPRISED,
ACTUALLY, THAT THAT HAPPENED. WASN'T -- I MEAN THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA -- I'M NOT
SAYING BETTER, BUT QUITE A BIT DIFFERENT. I THINK THAT
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF WHAT IS THE -- THE UKRAINE AND
PART OF -- NOW IT'S UKRAINE; PART OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, IT
WAS GIVEN BACK TO THE RUSSIANS. NOT GIVEN; IT WAS TAKEN
AWAY IN 1945, WHERE THERE WERE A LOT OF ORTHODOX AND
HASIDIC JEWS.

LANGER-81

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2 BUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE JEWS WERE PROBABLY
3 MORE INTEGRATED INTO THE CZECH LIFE; A LOT OF
4 SYNAGOGUES. THEY WERE JEWISH, BUT THEY WERE MORE -- I
5 WOULDN'T SAY ASSIMILATED; I WOULD SAY INTEGRATED. SO
6 THERE WAS NOT SUCH A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE. YOU DIDN'T
7 SEE PEOPLE IN CAFTANS SO MUCH WALKING WITH THE BIG HAT
8 AND -- THOUGH THERE WAS A GROUP OF ORTHODOX JEWS IN THE
9 TOWN THAT I CAME FROM.

10 BUT WE -- NOTHING LIKE THAT HAPPENED IN
11 CZECHOSLOVAKIA. AS I WAS TELLING YOU, NO, WE DIDN'T
12 SPEAK YIDDISH. WE DIDN'T HAVE THIS YIDDISH (SOUNDS LIKE
13 KITE OR GITE). WE SPOKE CZECH. THAT WAS OUR LANGUAGE.

14 IN FACT, WHEN WE CAME TO AUSCHWITZ, A LOT
15 OF POLISH JEWS DISLIKED US FOR THE FACT THAT WE DIDN'T
16 SPEAK YIDDISH. THEY THOUGHT THAT WE WERE ASHAMED OF THE
17 FACT THAT WE WERE JEWISH. JUST WASN'T PART OF OUR
18 UPBRINGING. AND IT WAS THROWN INTO OUR FACE MANY TIMES.

19 IT JUST WAS NOT OUR LANGUAGE AND IT ISN'T
20 MY LANGUAGE TODAY. I HAVE LEARNED IT AND I HAVE SORT OF
21 USED IT FOR FUN BECAUSE, YOU KNOW, IN GERMANY YIDDISH IS
22 SOMEWHAT -- YIDDISH HAS THE ORIGINS OF GERMANY, THE OLD
23 GERMANY. BUT IT WAS DIFFERENT.

24 BY MS. OBER:

25 Q. I HAVE A QUESTION FROM -- THAT I RECALL

LANGER-82

FROM THE LAST INTERVIEW YOU GAVE, AND THIS MAY BE JUST TOO INTRUSIVE TO GO BACK. BUT YOU WERE IN A CLINIC, I THINK IT WAS IN BUCHENWALD, WITH YOUR FEET?

A. CLINIC, HOSPITAL.

Q. AND YOU SAID DURING THAT INTERVIEW THAT YOU SAW SOME TERRIBLE THINGS BUT YOU DIDN'T WANT TO -- YOU DIDN'T KNOW IF WE WANTED TO HEAR THE DISGUSTING THINGS.

A. WELL, YOU KNOW, MAYBE THEY WERE TERRIBLE -- MAYBE THEY WEREN'T THE SORT OF TERRIBLE THINGS THAT YOU SEE TODAY. IT'S JUST -- I REMEMBER SAYING THAT. IT WAS JUST -- WHEN I SAID "TERRIBLE," IT WAS TERRIBLE THEN, YOU KNOW. TODAY WHAT YOU SEE ON TV IS PROBABLY -- YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU LOOK AT PICTURES OF ETHIOPIA, IT'S EQUALLY TERRIBLE. YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN?

I SAW PEOPLE JUST, YOU KNOW, WITH DIARRHEA AND JUST SORT OF DISAPPEARING IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES. YOU KNOW, I KNOW I -- I DON'T KNOW IF I MENTIONED IT. I MAY HAVE. FOR EXAMPLE, PEOPLE WERE -- JUST GOT BONES, YOU KNOW, JUST GOT BONES. AND THEY WERE CHEWING ON THE BONES AND THEY WERE CONSTIPATED.

I REMEMBER THAT THEY PUT A MAN ON -- THEY WERE JUST SCRAPING FROM HIS RECTUM BONES. THEY WERE JUST -- AND THEN THE MEN GOT DIARRHEA. JUST A DAY, HE WAS GONE, GONE. YOU KNOW, YOU SAW AMPUTATIONS JUST

LANGER-83

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RIGHT THERE, RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.

SO IT -- FOR A 15-YEAR-OLD THEY WERE
TERRIBLE THEN. SO MAYBE I MADE IT SOUND MORE DRAMATIC
THAN IT REALLY IS TODAY. I MEAN, THERE WERE THINGS
THAT, YOU KNOW, 15 YEAR-OLDS NORMALLY DON'T SEE. SO
I -- YOU KNOW, TERRIBLE, I THINK IT'S TERRIBLE WHEN YOU
SEE A HUMAN BEING JUST FADE AWAY.

BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

Q. IT SEEMS A PARADOX TO ME THAT AT THAT SAME
TIME THEY ARE TRYING TO EXTERMINATE AND ELIMINATE, THEY
ARE ALSO TRYING TO HEAL AND CURE. I FIND THAT A
PARADOX.

A. BUCHENWALD WAS A CAMP THAT WAS -- YOU KNOW,
I SORT OF ASKED THAT QUESTION MYSELF. BUCHENWALD WAS A
CAMP THAT WAS FOUNDED RIGHT IN THE THIRTIES, YOU KNOW.
IT WASN'T FOR JEWS. IT WAS FOR THE -- IT WAS POLITICAL
PRISONERS, YOU KNOW, PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT SYMPATHETIC TO
THE NAZI REGIME.

SO THAT WAS THE ORIGIN OF THE -- YOU KNOW,
THERE WAS THE LEADER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN GERMANY.
HIS NAME WAS TELEMANN, SAME AS THE COMPOSER, WHO LIVED
IN CAMP. SO THEY DID HAVE A HOSPITAL OF SORTS, YOU
KNOW, LIKE THEY HAVE A HOSPITAL IN SAN QUINTEN. I MEAN,
IT WAS A PRISON; IT WAS A CAMP PRISON. SO THEY DID HAVE

LANGER-84

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A HOSPITAL.

YOU KNOW, IF SOMEBODY GOT A TYPHOID FEVER, THE GERMANS WERE NOT IMMUNE TO THAT, YOU KNOW, THE GUARDS. BECAUSE IF YOU DIDN'T TAKE CARE OF IT, IT COULD EASILY SPREAD. IT IS A PARADOX, BUT THAT WAS -- YOU KNOW, I THINK THAT THEY DID HAVE THAT.

LISTEN, DID IT MAKE ANY SENSE THAT WHEN THEY WERE LIQUIDATING THE CAMP, WHEN THE RUSSIANS WERE, YOU KNOW, INSTEAD OF TAKING PEOPLE TO FIGHT THE WAR, THEY WERE LIQUIDATING CAMPS? IT TOOK THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TO MOVE THE JEWS AND THE PRISONERS, YOU KNOW. I COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT. CERTAINLY DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.

BUT IT IS A -- BUT PERHAPS MY EXPLANATION WOULD BE -- I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S ACCURATE -- THAT THE CAMP WAS FOUNDED IN THE THIRTIES AND THAT'S WHEN THE HOSPITAL WAS -- I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY DIDN'T, YOU KNOW. I WAS USELESS. I MEAN, I WAS USELESS AT ALL TIMES AS -- YOU KNOW, PEOPLE WERE NOT IN THE CAMPS TO WORK. I WAS -- THEY WERE -- THERE WERE SOME, LIKE MAUTHAUSEN, AND THERE WERE WORK CAMPS. BUT WHAT THE PEOPLE WERE DOING WAS NOT PRODUCTIVE, NOT PRODUCTIVE AT ALL. IT MUST HAVE BEEN JUST A TREMENDOUS HATE OF JEWS.

THAT'S SOMETHING ELSE I COULD NEVER

LANGER-85

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2 EXPLAIN. YOU KNOW, WHY, WHAT BROUGHT IT IN THE GERMANS,
3 WHAT BROUGHT IT ABOUT THAT THEY HAD SUCH AN INCREDIBLE
4 HATE TOWARDS THE JEWS? WHERE THE JEWS WERE SO ACTIVE IN
5 GERMANY, SUCH A PRODUCTIVE MINORITY; I MEAN WITHIN THE
6 GERMAN NATION AND MANY OTHER EUROPEAN NATIONS. COULDN'T
7 EXPLAIN IT.

8 YEAH, THEY DID HAVE A HOSPITAL. IT WAS NOT
9 VERY -- YOU KNOW, BARE MINIMUM. BUT NEVERTHELESS, IT
10 WAS A PLACE THAT THEY PUT PEOPLE WHO WERE ILL.

11 MR. KIRSCHNER: I'VE GOT ONE QUESTION, JUDITH.

12 Q. AGAIN, FROM THE EARLIER INTERVIEW -- I
13 FORGET THE PRECISE CONTEXT -- BUT YOU REFERRED TO AN
14 INCIDENT WHERE YOU -- A MAN WAS HIDDEN IN SOME STRAW,
15 AND A GERMAN SOLDIER, I THINK, PITCHFORKED THE STRAW --

16 A. NO, NO, THAT WAS DURING A MARCH.

17 GO AHEAD, I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T LET YOU
18 FINISH.

19 Q. IF YOU WOULD JUST EXPAND ON THAT ANECDOTE.

20 A. WELL, I THOUGHT I DID. THE MAN IS ALIVE.
21 THE MAN IS ALIVE. HE LIVES SOMEWHERE IN NEW YORK. HE
22 COMES FROM MY HOMETOWN. HE WAS ON THAT MARCH AND HE
23 TRIED TO ESCAPE SEVERAL TIMES.

24 THE FIRST TIME THEY -- YOU KNOW, THEY -- I
25 MEAN YOU WERE IN THE FARMHOUSES. THE BARN WAS USUALLY

LANGER-86

1 ABOVE THE STABLES, YOU KNOW, WAY UP THERE. AND WE HAD
2 TO CRAWL UP THERE WITH LADDERS.

3 THEN THE GERMANS, BEFORE WE LEFT -- YOU
4 KNOW, PEOPLE WERE HIDING UNDER THE STRAW; HOPEFULLY THEY
5 WILL NOT FIND US. AND THEN THEY PROBABLY THOUGHT MAYBE
6 THE RUSSIANS WILL CATCH UP WITH THEM.

7 BUT THEY CAUGHT HIM THE FIRST TIME. THE
8 PITCHFORK DIDN'T HIT HIM. THEY THREW HIM DOWN. I MEAN,
9 THEY THREW HIM FROM THE FIRST FLOOR. NOTHING HAPPENED
10 TO HIM, AND HE ESCAPED SEVERAL TIMES.

11 YOU KNOW, I -- WHAT IS INTERESTING, I
12 TALKED TO HIM ABOUT IT ON THE PHONE NOT LONG AGO AND HE
13 TOTALLY SUPPRESSED. HE COULD NOT REMEMBER IT VERY WELL.
14 AS I WAS TALKING, HE HAS TOTALLY SUPPRESSED HIS -- I
15 MEAN, HE WAS -- NOT TO REMEMBER THAT, SOMEBODY HAD TO
16 HAVE SUPPRESSED IT. HE COULD NOT REMEMBER THAT. HE
17 ESCAPED.

18 AND THEN AS WE WERE TALKING, HE -- IT WAS
19 SORT OF COMING BACK TO HIM. I MEAN, HE -- I DON'T THINK
20 HE EVEN RETURNED TO OUR HOMETOWN. HE STAYED IN GERMANY
21 AFTER THE WAR, MARRIED A HALF-JEWISH WOMAN WHOSE MOTHER
22 WAS ARRESTED BY THE GESTAPO, HAD A JEWISH MOTHER. AND I
23 DON'T THINK I'VE EVER MET HER, AND HE NEVER CAME BACK.

24 SO HE PROBABLY CONSCIOUSLY TRIED TO
25

LANGER-87

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2 SUPPRESS THAT. THAT PROBABLY IS MORE INTERESTING ABOUT
3 THE STORY THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THAT I HAVE TO REMIND HIM
4 OF THAT, THAT HE WAS CAUGHT BY THE GERMANS. AND IT'S
5 NOT LONG AGO THAT I TALKED TO HIM.

6 YOU KNOW, WHEN I MEET SOME OF THE PEOPLE
7 THAT WERE WITH ME, I LIKE TO TALK OF THE PRESENT, OF
8 WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THEM SINCE THE WAR RATHER THAN WHAT
9 WE WENT THROUGH IN THE WAR.

10 YOU KNOW, I LIKE TO SEE THE PEOPLE WHO SORT
11 OF I KNOW FROM BEFORE, BUT I LIKE TO KNOW HOW THEY ARE
12 DOING NOW AND HOW THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN ARE
13 DOING RATHER THAN WHAT WE HAVE DONE DURING THE WAR. WE
14 HAVE DONE SOME OF IT WHEN I MET THE PEOPLE. IT'S
15 INEVITABLE.

16 BUT I DON'T THRIVE ON IT. SOME PEOPLE DO.
17 THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T KNOW HOW I'LL DO IN THIS INTERVIEW;
18 IF I COULD, YOU KNOW -- YOU KNOW, IF I -- I'M SURE YOU
19 HAVE SPOKEN TO PEOPLE WHO ARE MUCH MORE DESCRIPTIVE AND
20 ELABORATE ON WHAT HAS HAPPENED DURING THE WAR. I WAS --
21 I THINK MY RECOLLECTION OF IT PROBABLY WAS EQUALLY
22 INTERESTING OF HOW I AM, LOOKING BACK AT THAT.

23 YOU KNOW, I MENTIONED, YOU KNOW, ABOUT
24 MY -- NUMBER OF PEOPLE JUST (SOUNDS LIKE DEUCED AREA) A
25 LOT.

LANGER-88

I MEAN EVEN, YOU KNOW, PEOPLE WHO WERE BORN WAY AFTER THE WAR WHO KNOW A LOT ABOUT IT. I HAD AN ATTORNEY WHO WAS TERRIBLY -- YOU KNOW, WHO DID A THESIS ON -- FOR HIS PH.D. ABOUT CONCENTRATION CAMPS. HE WAS TERRIBLY INTERESTED. I DON'T KNOW IF I WAS PAYING FOR HIS TIME WHEN I WAS TELLING HIM ABOUT CONCENTRATION CAMPS. YOU KNOW ATTORNEYS. NO, HE WASN'T RETAINED AFTER THAT.

BUT HE WAS TERRIBLY INTERESTED AND HE KNEW A LOT ABOUT IT. I WAS AMAZED. I'M SURPRISED WHEN SOMEBODY, ESPECIALLY AN AMERICAN WHO IS BORN WAY AFTER THE WAR, KNOWS A LOT ABOUT IT. I'M REALLY AMAZED. BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS IN THIS COUNTRY. THEY MIX IT UP WITH YUGOSLAVIA VERY OFTEN. THAT AMAZES ME EQUALLY.

Q. DO YOU HAVE A TATTOOED NUMBER?

A. UH-HUH.

Q. WOULD YOU ALLOW US TO SEE IT?

A. CERTAINLY. (REVEALS TATTOO ON ARM.)

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. THIS IS SOMETHING I WAS HESITANT TO ASK YOU.

A. NO, PROBLEM.

Q. I DIDN'T ASK. I'M USUALLY PRETTY FEARLESS,

LANGER-89

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BUT I WAS --

A. I MEAN, I'M NOT SHOWING OFF ANYTHING. I MEAN, YOU ASKED ME. I WOULD HAVE NEVER -- I WAS GOING TO HAVE A SHIRT WITH SHORT SLEEVES, AND BECAUSE OF IT I TOOK A SHIRT WITH LONG SLEEVES BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO BE OBVIOUS. BUT I DON'T -- THAT WAS ONLY BECAUSE OF THIS INTERVIEW. I USUALLY DON'T -- CAN I PUT MY --

MR. KIRSCHMAN: SURE.

A. (ROLLS SLEEVE DOWN.)

BY THE WAY, IT'S 168597. THE ONE NUMBER IS QUITE -- IT'S NOT LEGIBLE. THE 7 I THINK HAS, AFTER A WHILE, DISAPPEARED. I KNOW THEY WERE CHECKING US AND THEY HAVE REDONE THAT AGAIN, YEAH. AND I PROBABLY TOLD YOU THAT THERE WAS -- MY BROTHER WAS 1595 -- THERE WAS ONE NUMBER BETWEEN US, AND WE NEVER FOUND OUT WHO THE PERSON WAS WHO WAS IN BETWEEN US.

YEAH, EVEN NOW IN EUROPE SOMEBODY WAS JUST LOOKING AT IT, AND SOMETIMES PEOPLE ASK ME WHAT IT IS. AND I TELL THEM IT'S A PHONE NUMBER, AND IF THEY ARE STUPID ENOUGH, THEY BUY IT.

YOU KNOW, I GUESS, TALKING ABOUT MY CHILDREN, I MEAN, THEY SAW IT EVERY -- YOU KNOW, THEY THOUGHT IT WAS JUST -- YOU KNOW, THEY NEVER THINK ABOUT IT. I OFTEN WONDER WHAT MY KIDS FEEL ABOUT THE CAMP,

LANGER-90

1 BUT, YOU KNOW, THEY'RE JUST --

2 BY MS. BACKOVER:

3 Q. DID YOU EVER JUST TRY TO ASK THEM?

4 A. WELL, YOU KNOW, I DECIDED THAT IT -- THE
5 FACT THAT THEY DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW BOTHERED ME. MAYBE
6 IT WASN'T FAIR OF ME, BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY YOUNG. AND
7 I THINK THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES, WHEN THEY ASK ME,
8 MAYBE THAT'S THE TIME WHEN I WILL TELL THEM; AT THEIR --
9 WHEN THEY ARE READY.

10 MR. KIRSCHNER: BUT THEY DO, OF COURSE, KNOW A
11 GREAT DEAL ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED? THEY KNOW ENOUGH TO NOT
12 WANT TO KNOW?

13 A. LISTEN, I MADE THEM COME TO DACHAU. I MADE
14 THEM GO AND SEE IT. I TOOK THEM TO THERESIEN. I MEAN,
15 I MADE THEM GO. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO GO. BECAUSE IT
16 SORT OF SETS THEM APART FROM -- AND AGAIN, IN ALL
17 FAIRNESS, I UNDERSTAND THAT.

18 AND IF THEY EVER WILL SEE THIS TAPE, THEY
19 PROBABLY KNOW HOW I FEEL TODAY. BUT THEY ARE NOT
20 INTERESTED IN IT. APPARENTLY IT'S QUITE COMMON, I'M
21 TOLD. SO I LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT.

22 BY MS. BACKOVER:

23 Q. DID THEY EVER ASK YOU -- I KNOW THAT
24 THEY'VE OBVIOUSLY SEEN THE NUMBERS.
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LANGER-91

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A. OF COURSE.

Q. DID THEY EVER ASK YOU WHAT IT WAS?

A. THE NUMBER?

Q. YES.

A. OH, THEY KNEW THAT. I MEAN, THEY KNOW WHAT IT IS. I GUESS THEY KNOW WHAT IT IS. ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS WAS SOMEWHAT CURIOUS, BUT I GUESS BECAUSE OF THE OTHER SHE GAVE UP TO MAKE HER LOOK BAD, SO THEN SHE DROPPED IT.

BUT THE TIME WILL COME. WE LIVE IN DIFFERENT TIMES. BUT I -- AS I SAID A FEW TIMES BEFORE, YOU KNOW, THEIR FRIENDS DON'T HAVE FATHERS WHO WERE IN CAMP, AND THAT SETS THEM APART. AND THE ONLY WAY I UNDERSTAND IT IS INTELLECTUALLY; NO OTHER WAY. I MEAN, WOULD I BE INTERESTED? WOULD I BE ANY DIFFERENT? PROBABLY NOT. SO YOU CAN'T HOLD IT AGAINST THEM.

IT'S, YOU KNOW, NOT MANY, AS I SAID, IT'S -- WELL, NEVER MIND. JUST A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT THAT. IT'S JUST -- MAYBE WE SHOULD STOP, I THINK. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME. IT'S 12:30.

BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

Q. SURE. PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO PHOTOGRAPH THE COMPOSITE PICTURE?

A. WOULD THAT --

LANGER-92

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2 Q. SO TELL US ABOUT THIS COLLAGE OF PHOTOS
3 HERE.

4 A. WELL, THIS IS A -- SOMETHING THAT MY WIFE
5 MADE UP FOR ME. AS I SAID, WHEN SHE CUT UP SOME OF
6 THOSE PICTURES, IT SHOCKED ME. IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY
7 PRESENT AND I UPSET HER BY BEING SHOCKED. BUT SHE SAID,
8 "LOOK, AT LEAST NOW WE CAN DISPLAY THESE PHOTOGRAPHS.
9 BEFORE THEY WERE IN A DRAWER." AND AND SHE HAS A POINT.

10 WELL, THAT WAS -- I WAS ABOUT 12 OR 13
11 YEARS OLD. THAT WAS DURING THE WAR, OBVIOUSLY. YOU CAN
12 SEE WITH THE STAR OF DAVID.

13 THAT'S MY FATHER AS AN OFFICER IN THE
14 AUSTRIAN/HUNGARIAN ARMY. AND HE WAS A LITTLE BIT
15 BALD-HEADED, LIKE I AM TODAY. BUT NOW WHEN YOU SEE A
16 LITTLE HAIR, THAT WAS WHEN HE WAS A STUDENT AT THE
17 UNIVERSITY IN VIENNA.

18 IF YOU WILL RAISE IT BELOW THE UNIFORM,
19 THAT'S IT, HE WAS A VETERINARIAN, ACTUALLY. THAT'S MY
20 FATHER.

21 Q. THAT'S YOUR FATHER?

22 A. THERE IS MY FATHER. CLAY PIGEONS; HE WAS A
23 HUNTER.

24 Q. YOU SAID HE WAS A VETERINARIAN?

25 A. YEAH. HE GAVE THAT UP AND WENT INTO THE

LANGER-93

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LUMBER BUSINESS.

Q. AND THE CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING, WHAT YEAR WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN, WOULD YOU GUESS?

A. PROBABLY IN THE THIRTIES. PROBABLY IN THE MID-THIRTIES, I WOULD IMAGINE. HE WAS AN AVID HUNTER. AND WHEN I WAS BACK, NOW THE HUNTING PARTNER -- THE WIFE OF A HUNTING PARTNER, I WENT TO VISIT HER, AND SHE GAVE ME HORNS OF A ROEBUCK. IT'S A TYPE OF EUROPEAN DEER, A LITTLE DEER. AND WE REMINISCED.

THAT WAS WONDERFUL TIMES, HUNTING. THAT WAS NOT SOMETHING THE JEWISH PEOPLE USED TO DO, BUT WE WERE DIFFERENT.

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. YOUR FATHER'S NAME, I DON'T -- --

A. HIS NAME WAS ARNOST, A-R-N-O-S-T, WITH AN ACCENT OVER THE S. AND THESE ARE -- THIS IS MY -- MY MOTHER IS THE ONE ON THE LEFT.

BY MR. KIRSCHMAN:

Q. FAR LEFT?

A. FAR LEFT, CORRECT. AND THESE ARE MY GRANDPARENTS. I DID KNOW MY GRANDMOTHER. MY GRANDFATHER I DIDN'T KNOW. HE DIED WHEN MY MOTHER WAS NINE YEARS OLD.

Q. AND THESE TWO PEOPLE ARE?

LANGER-94

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2 A. MY MOTHER'S SISTERS. THEY BOTH WERE GASED
3 IN AUSCHWITZ.

4 BY MS. BACKOVER:

5 Q. AND THIS IS ABOUT WHEN?

6 A. WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW OLD -- I'M SORRY,
7 HOW OLD WAS MY MOTHER THERE? WAS SHE 11? 12? A LONG
8 TIME AGO. MY MOTHER WAS BORN IN 1902.

9 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

10 Q. WERE YOU AT AUSCHWITZ AT THE SAME TIME THEY
11 WERE?

12 A. WELL, THEY CAME -- THEY WENT TO THERESIEN
13 AT THE SAME TIME. WE STAYED AND THEY WENT STRAIGHT ON.
14 THEY WENT STRAIGHT ON TO AUSCHWITZ. AND THOSE PEOPLE
15 WHO DIDN'T STAY IN THERESIEN WENT STRAIGHT INTO THE GAS
16 CHAMBER.

17 AND THAT'S MY MOTHER, AND THAT -- THE
18 PICTURE ON THE FAR LEFT IS WHAT WE LOOKED LIKE AFTER THE
19 WAR WHEN WE CAME BACK. THAT WAS 1946.

20 Q. AND THE PEOPLE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT ON THAT
21 PHOTO?

22 A. ON THE LEFT, THAT'S MYSELF, MY MOTHER AND
23 MY BROTHER.

24 Q. DO YOU --

25 A. GO AHEAD.

LANGER-95

1
2 Q. DID YOU KNOW THAT THEY HAD GONE ON TO
3 AUSCHWITZ?

4 A. NO IDEA.

5 Q. THEY JUST WERE NOT AT THERESIEN?

6 A. THEY JUST WERE NOT AT THERESIEN. THEY WERE
7 GONE. WHETHER THEY WERE ALIVE OR NOT. OF COURSE, LATER
8 ON WE HAVE LEARNED -- LATER ON WE LEARNED WHAT HAPPENED
9 WITH THOSE PEOPLE WHO WENT ON. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT
10 LATER ON. HOW LATER, I DON'T KNOW, BUT THAT'S WHAT
11 HAPPENED.

12 IF YOU WILL BRING IT UP, THAT'S MY
13 GRANDFATHER IN FRONT. THAT'S OUR HOUSE IN
14 CZECHOSLOVAKIA. AND WE HAVE SOLD IT AND THE PEOPLE HAVE
15 REDONE IT. IT LOOKS TOTALLY DIFFERENT NOW. I WAS GOING
16 TO TAKE A PICTURE OF IT AND I SAID, "THAT'S NOT MY HOUSE
17 ANYMORE. I WON'T DO THAT."

18 THAT'S THE GRAVESTONE IN ISRAEL OF MY
19 BROTHER, WHO WAS A PILOT AND WHO GOT KILLED IN A PLANE
20 CRASH. AND THERE IS A -- MY MOTHER.

21 Q. THAT'S YOUR MOTHER?

22 A. THAT'S MY MOTHER.

23 Q. WHAT YEAR WAS THIS PHOTO TAKEN IN THE
24 CENTER THERE?

25 A. PROBABLY AFTER THE WAR, I WOULD IMAGINE

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AFTER THE WAR.

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. AND YOUR MOTHER'S NAME?

A. ERENA, E-R-E-N-A, WHICH IS MY OLDER
DAUGHTER'S MIDDLE NAME.

THAT'S AGAIN MY FATHER HUNTING THERE, YOU
SEE. AND THAT'S ME AS AN ISRAELI SOLDIER RIGHT THERE.

Q. IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO, YOU LOOK
TOO YOUNG TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH A GUN.

A. WITH WHAT?

Q. YOU LOOK TOO YOUNG TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH A
GUN. EVERYBODY IS. I'M NOT SURE AGE IS THE CRITERION.

A. WELL, I WAS MORE -- I MUST HAVE BEEN 18,
19. NO, THAT COULDN'T BE. THAT WAS IN 1949. I WAS
ABOUT 20 YEARS OLD.

Q. ALMOST 20.

A. UH-HUH. OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK IN THIS
COUNTRY -- NOT OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK IN THIS COUNTRY BUT
OLD ENOUGH TO CARRY A GUN, WHICH IS SURPRISINGLY YOUNG.

Q. YOU'RE JUST SURPRISINGLY YOUNG-LOOKING.

A. SO THEY TELL ME.

BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

Q. THIS GROUP AGAIN IS WHAT?

A. THIS GROUP IS IN THE ISRAELI AIR FORCE.

LANGER-97

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2 THEY WERE JUST PILOTS WITH MY BROTHER. I ONLY KNEW ONE
3 OF THE MEN. ON THE RIGHT WAS SOMEBODY WHO WAS WITH US
4 IN CAMP DURING THE WAR, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO THE OTHERS
5 WERE. AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT PIECE OF PAPER
6 SIGNIFIES.

7 Q. ONE OF THESE PEOPLE IS YOUR BROTHER?

8 A. THE ONE ON THE LEFT.

9 Q. THE ONE ON THE LEFT. OKAY.

10 A. THE TALLEST.

11 Q. THAT OVERHEAD IS YOUR FATHER'S DOG, LORD?

12 A. LORD, YEAH LORD.

13 Q. LORD NUMBER 1?

14 A. LORD NUMBER 1. HE WAS A VERY -- I MEAN I
15 HAVE VERY FOND MEMORY OF THIS DOG. AND I -- IN MY FIRST
16 INTERVIEW I MENTIONED THAT MY FATHER HAD TO TURN A DOG
17 IN AND WHAT A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE IT MUST HAVE BEEN FOR
18 A MAN JUST TO GO AND JUST TURN YOUR DOG OVER TO THE
19 GERMANS. I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE DOING IT TODAY. I WOULD
20 SHOOT THEM BEFORE I COULD GIVE THEM TO THE GERMANS.

21 Q. IT WAS A GERMAN SHORTHAIK?

22 A. HE WAS A GERMAN SHORT -- NO, HE WAS A
23 GERMAN WIREHAIR, ACTUALLY. SAME DIFFERENCE EXCEPT
24 LONGER HAIR.

25 THAT'S MY MOTHER.

LANGER-98

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Q. THAT'S YOUR MOTHER LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW
IN THE PHOTO WITH THE DOG THERE?

A. THAT IS A BUILDING WHICH USED TO BE A
JEWISH SCHOOL IN THE JEWISH QUARTER. I COULD HARDLY
CALL IT A GHETTO; IT WAS A JEWISH QUARTER. AND THAT WAS
THE APARTMENT OF THE HEADMASTER. BUT THE WIDOW HAS
VACATED AND -- THAT HOUSE AND WE WERE ABLE TO MOVE IN
AFTER WE WERE EVICTED FROM OUR HOUSE. AND THAT'S LORD
ACTUALLY, TOO. I SEE THE PICTURE NOW ENLARGED. YOU SEE
MY FATHER ON THE RIGHT, RIGHT THERE. SEE HIM?

Q. IN THE HUNTING PHOTO?

A. THAT'S CORRECT. I'VE NEVER NOTICED THAT.
I'M SORRY I DON'T HAVE MY PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER ON THAT
THING, BUT SHE DIED VERY LONG, LONG TIME AGO, SO THERE
WERE NOT MANY PHOTOS OF HER.

BY MS. BACKOVER:

Q. I DON'T THINK YOU'VE MENTIONED WHEN WE WERE
RECORDING YOUR BROTHER'S NAME.

A. HIS NAME WAS PAVAL, P-A-V-A-L. ACTUALLY,
MY DAUGHTER -- I HAVE A YOUNGEST DAUGHTER. HER NAME IS
PAVEL. HER NAME IS PAVAL. ALL MY CHILDREN HAVE CZECH
NAMES. IN FACT, THE OTHER DAY OVER DINNER WE WERE
TALKING ABOUT IT, WHY DID YOU GIVE US NAMES LIKE THAT?
BUT DEEP DOWN THEY REALLY LIKE THEM.

LANGER-99

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2 Q. THEY DID ACTUALLY COME TO QUESTION THAT?

3 A. YES, WHY? GOD, I HATE MY NAME. BUT I
4 DON'T BELIEVE IT.5 Q. BESIDES, I THINK ALL LITTLE KIDS -- OR AT
6 LEAST ALL LITTLE GIRLS -- GO THROUGH A STAGE --7 A. WELL, ONE OF THEM'S NAME IS MIAH
8 (PHONETIC), WHICH WAS SORT OF TOLERABLE, I THINK. ONE
9 OF THEM IS PETRA AND ONE OF THEM IS PALA. AND I THINK
10 THEY PROBABLY WOULD LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT AS FAR AS --
11 THERE'S PROBABLY NOT ANOTHER ONE. I WAS TOLD THERE IS A
12 GOOD TENNIS PLAYER IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA; HIS NAME IS PETRA
13 LANGER, ACTUALLY.
14 BY MR. KIRSCHNER:

15 Q. THE BAG, YOU HAVE A BAG THAT YOU BROUGHT?

16 A. WELL, I GOT THIS, JUST A SHOPPING BAG FROM
17 CZECHOSLOVAKIA.18 Q. WHY DON'T YOU DRAPE IT OVER THE BACK OF THE
19 CHAIR THERE SO WE CAN SEE IT.20 A. I DON'T KNOW. I JUST -- THIS MEANS --
21 ZELENÍ MEANS VEGETABLES, AND THERESIEN, SO IT'S PROBABLY
22 NAMED -- ONE OF THESE COMMUNIST COOPERATIVES. THAT
23 WHERE IT PROBABLY ORIGINATED, AND I SAW THE BAG. I
24 DON'T KNOW WHERE I TOOK IT, AND I JUST -- I PROBABLY
25 BOUGHT SOMETHING IN THAT TOWN BECAUSE I VISITED

LANGER-100

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2 THERESIEN MYSELF WITH MY FAMILY. AND I SAID, "WELL,
3 THAT WILL PROBABLY BE AN APPROPRIATE BAG TO BRING THOSE
4 PHOTOGRAPHS IN."

5 (END OF TAPE TWO.)
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