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INTERVIEW OF

W. DIETER BERGMAN, M.D.

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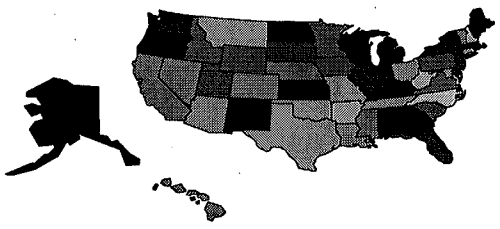

MS. ROSENBERG: Dr. Bergman, I was wondering if when you were in the Organization Todt did any one talk about escaping?

A. Well, actually it was discussed. Everybody, always, whenever you are confined someplace you talk about it to your friends. We all came to the conclusion that in a way we were protected. I mentioned a little while ago to Lennie, is that his name? That during the summer semester, when I was a student, all my buddies, once I was in civilian clothes, all my buddies had to serve a few months on the front or in a field hospital. Every year about half of them got killed or wounded and disappeared from the scene. Eventually I was one of the two out of ten who survived in medical school.

It turns out, except for occasional mishaps and the possible attacks by the Allied military, we were safer in France than we would be in Germany, because nobody bombed very much of Western France.

In Germany almost a million people got killed by fire bombing and all that in the cities.

Escaping, the question is where do you escape to? You depend on ration cards. You can't get any food. You can't just expect that people share their miserable rations with you if you run away. You run a way to where? You hear heroic stories of Dutch people,

Bulgarian people and Ann Frank and so forth sheltering people, Jews, behind double doors and splitting their miserable rations with those Jews living upstairs someplace. Every time somebody coughs they bring the wrath of the party to their miserable lives. At least we had reasonably decent beds and food.

In this great concentration camp called Germany there was really no way to escape. Some of us had friends someplace. One of my buddies made friends with a French girl. She almost got him out of France. We were walking on the cliffs of Calais from which you would look across the channel and see the White Cliffs of Dover. My buddy and I would dream of why can't we just swim across this channel and run off, but we never did.

A couple people were actually sent home from the camp. One had a brother who was in the military and was distinguished and got an Iron Cross. So they discharged him from our camp. As a matter of fact, he got wounded in an air raid. While the rest of us were fine, you know, we didn't see much point in escaping.

Eventually I have told you last time when it came close to the wire, just shortly after the invasion, a buddy and mine and I, we escaped anyway, because I wanted to get to England because my mother was living in

England. The only relatives I still had left from the family.

I didn't know at the time how to get to England. It turned out to be reasonably easy. But this was not a concentration camp catastrophe. It was very rough life, and hard labor and not enough food and not enough sleep, and miserable. 23 year old people, when they are basically in good health, can tolerate an awful lot of stuff without feeling like they are day-by-day victims.

We didn't feel that anybody was trying to kill us. They didn't want to kill us. They wanted us to build the West Wall and try to prevent the invasion.

Q. What were the ages of the rest of the people who were with you?

A. That's an interesting question. I don't think there was anybody in our company that was older than 28 maybe. There was a company of French Jews or partial Jews close by. They also worked on the Western Wall. They were much older than I.

I have no idea whether there were any -- That's a good question. I never thought about it.

There must have been some people, half Jewish people, that were 40 or 50 for God's sake. What happened to them I have no idea. We were all my age or

a little older. Not much.

On the other hand, we were the people that were young and strong and most likely to do a good job building fortifications under very adverse conditions: Lack of material, lack of transportation, lack of food. Maybe I am making too light of it. It was really a horrible situation. I was just happy that I survived it. That is why I am talking about it as if it was a piece of cake. It certainly wasn't.

Q. I was wondering if you could describe that day that you escaped. What happened?

A. When the Americans and other Allies that occupied Pas de Calais, and rushed to capture the sites where V-2 bombs were built and sent off to England. They were some fabulous underground shelters where they built those things. Of course, this was right where we had our camp. We had to move away.

So in the middle of the night, the evening, we marched a whole bunch of us down the street with big bomb holes in the street, to another location somewhere.

Pretty soon it turned out to my buddy Willie (Last name recited). I don't know whether I should mention names. This kind of a report isn't going to be available to almost anybody, is it? I will say my buddy Willie and leave out the last name. I don't have his

permission to do that. He is a big strong, down to earth fellow. I was the brains of the combination. We decided during the march in the darkness. Don't forget it was wartime. Nobody had full lights on. You couldn't see anything. SS people with the guns that were guarding us, they couldn't see everybody either.

So we decided we would slowly between eleven and one in the morning move our way back in the column and get to the end of it. At one fine moment we realized we were going to cross a little river over a bridge. By giving each other a little signal we dived over the bridge and underneath the bridge and just stayed there with our feet up to our knees in water and without moving, to see whether anybody had noticed that we had disappeared. Apparently nobody had. We were careful and very quiet.

We just kind of stayed there for several hours. About an hour after we had separated from the troops there was a funny shifting light coming down the street behind us. I realized that the dreaded commandant of the camp was running a bike and catching up with the group. I had the wild idea to just jump up and kill that bastard and throw his body down in the river and hide his bike or use the bike myself to escape someplace. And then I didn't have the guts to do that.

It would have been easy because he was alone and it was pitch dark and they didn't know we were not in the column. So it was a safe case to do.

I have been thinking about it for half a century, kicking myself I was such a coward that I didn't even kill one of these bastards. I should have. It probably wouldn't have made any difference because there were 280 thousand bastards in Germany and one more or less didn't make any difference.

We waited a little longer and worked our way out of the river and tried to orient ourselves in the darkness to find out what now. Now you are escaped what do you do? So we happened to see a French farm house a couple hours later, with one little light shining in the kitchen or whatever it was.

We decided -- Willie decided, who spoke pretty good French, to go to the back door, rap at the back door, and it so happened that the sign he gave, whatever it was, was understood by the local people, the Resistance, the French underground, would always come to the back door and always after midnight and always have a certain sign. So the man living there came out with a flashlight.

Willie explained who we were. Obviously he didn't look like an escaped soldier or like a Nazi. The

man put us in the hayloft in the stables behind the house.

There we slept the first night, which was a major problem because once in a while you have to cough or you have to pee or you have to move. Every time you move a little bit of the hay runs down below.

It so happens later in the night a bunch of Germans came in with the tanks. At that time the area was still occupied by the German military. When you are sitting there drinking beer and suddenly there is some stuff coming down from the hayloft you wonder whether it's just a cat or whether some people are up there. You couldn't cough either. Sometimes you have to burp or something worse. I have a sentence in my book it says he gave up his life because of a misplaced fart. They would have heard every word you said down below. That was a horrible night trying not to move. At any rate, we were not discovered.

The next day or two days later they put us in the bottom of a hay wagon and shipped us to the town of Abbeville where they turned us over to the local resistance, who had already taken over the town of Abbeville. We were kept in the basement. That's where we a few days later heard the victory celebration, including the British Anthem.

Eventually we were turned over to the British military. That was the end of the war for us.

Q. I was wondering if you could describe the first POW Camp that you went to. Describe a typical day and tell us what it was like.

A. There were two first days. The first day in Abbeville. They put all the Germans in a courtyard at the local jail. Many of the German soldiers had thrown off their uniforms and pretended to be prisoners or they pretended to be civilians. I was a civilian. Everybody thought, yes, you Germans are all lying bastards and stand back there against the wall with your face to the wall and put your hand up on the wall.

Suddenly I realized there were 20 or 30 of us standing in the courtyard of the prison with their face to the wall. Behind us some Tommy with a submachine gun was just getting ready to crack his machine gun. I knew for a fact that the next thing I would hear is (sound made) and that would be the end of Dieter Bergman. Like an idiot, I turned around and in my somewhat deficient English said Hey sir, just a minute. I need to talk to you. I marched up to the machine gun. Everybody thought I must have been out of my mind.

The British lieutenant said hold your fire. What do you want? What is your name? I said this

fellow Willie and I have escaped from the Organization Todt. I even have documentation from our meal ticket. This man apparently believed us. He took us out of the lineup and put us in the prison cell and did not lock the cell.

I said, sir, do me a favor. Are you going to be here for a couple days? He said, Yes, of course. Will you please lock the cell? So these real Germans in the other cells don't come in and disembowl us in the middle of the night. They know we are the anti-Nazis and we have been their enemy.

They locked us up and gave us some food for a few days. That was the first day of POW. We were civilians, but still called POWs. They shipped us in some lorries away from the City of Abbeville, down the streets and we had to stand up in the truck. People threw all kinds of things at us, including rocks and chamber pots and you name it.

We were put in a barbed wire enclosure in the middle of a huge field. We figured, I don't know, I forgot the figure. I figured out three thousand people, Germans, standing in the field enclosed by barbed wire. There was barely enough room to get all of us to stand up there. There was no room to sit down, no toilet facilities, no water, and it was raining cats and dogs.

We stood three thousand of us we stood day and night on the soggy field, wet through the skin from rain, and from a medical sense I am still amazed because we had been told when you get wet and cold you get pneumonia and die. There were three thousand people wet through the night, no doctors, no medication, we didn't have a place to go to the bathroom and none of us seemed to get sick.

Eventually we were interviewed by some British people. I went to a British officer and said I am so glad I can -- interrogation officer, intelligence officer they call it in England, I guess. I said I am so glad I finally --. You asked me the first day. There were three first days. I am coming to the third first day now. I said I am so glad I finally see an officer. I am not a Nazi. I am not a soldier. I just want to go to England, to the wonderful country where my mother lives.

He said to me you fucking Nazis are all the same. You are liars. I have never seen anyone who is not a Nazi. You are all civilians, you are all wonderful anti-Nazis. Get out of my office. He threw me out.

The only way I could get to England at this point, eventually I convinced this man -- At that time

the only prisoners -- didn't I talk about all that when I was here before? Maybe I did.

At any rate, most standard prisoners were sent to America at the time. Only the politically unstable ones, real Nazis, and the ones that had information possibly, or the ones that had some other important interest were sent to England where the big interrogation camps were. So that is how I got to England. That is when I met this British officer. He said you German bastards are all the same. Anyway, I was put in the regular POW Camp.

For the first time in five months I had a real meal, real food and the whole thing, kippers, eggs, coffee and cream and cereal and milk and you name it. The British were very generous in the reception camp.

We all gorged ourselves on this wonderful food. Then we spent the next three days and nights sitting on the toilet. Couldn't eat a thing. It was horrible, because our stomachs were not ready. That was my first day in a prisoner of war camp in England. Things got better after that.

Q. What was a typical day like? What would you do?

A. Part of the two and-a-half years or so I was a civilian in England with a semblance of medical

school, including premed studying. The International Red Cross had gotten hold of some kind of group of buildings in one of the prisoner of war camps where they established an international academy of the Red Cross there. The idea was, first of all, they wanted to give some of us something to do so we wouldn't stand around and hate the British.

Number two, they knew they could get some good will for Germany by giving us a chance to learn something.

So they established a medical school and hired half a dozen college professors who were knowledgeable in chemistry and physics and botany and biology and physics and they were teaching us premed. That was the hardest studying I have ever done. This guy knew nothing about medicine. They really drilled us. We had all day long to sit there, lousy copies of somebody's handwritten notes, trying to learn something about premed. That was part of it.

The rest of the time, I think I was in a total of nine, ten, eleven different camps. The reason for the transfers was, number one, medical school was established.

Number two, the British authorities thought nobody should stay in the same place too long and make

too many contacts with the civilians on the outside and the third reason was eventually I ended up in a -- I was still in the Nazi camp where all the real Nazis were. They found out pretty soon that I was kind of a shaky character. I was not a real Nazi. I could not name any battalion or ranks. I couldn't even name what my rank was supposed to have been as a Nazi soldier, because I wasn't a Nazi soldier. One night a buddy of mine was attacked and almost killed. The same night I was captured singing in the choir. I was almost killed by a bunch of Nazi prisoners of war.

It was so powerful that somebody wrote a letter to the Times and the House of Commons. There was a question in the House of Commons that in camp so and so we understand several people were killed by Nazis, incarcerated Nazis, and what does the Interior Secretary think about security of foreign national under our protection?

After that day I was taken out and sent to another camp. The Nazi camp was wonderfully organized. Everybody had a nice place and bed and good food and there was no junk in the camp and everybody was singing in the chorus and playing theatre and reading books and had chess games and all kind of things.

I was transferred to the wonderful anti-Nazi

camp where all the real liberal democratic people had been sent. That was a dung heap of humanity. The first day they stole my watch. Every day you had to watch for your belongings. Food was lousy. It was dirty. You lost your pillow, you lost everything, stole my pants, stole shoes. It was a mess.

Eventually I got to be a camp, a German camp interpreter of some sort. I had a better case.

Eventually I succeeded in making contact with my mother. It took me well over a year for her to hear for the first time that I had arrived in England. Some interpreter officer got us back together.

So then I wanted to stay in England as long as I could. But I couldn't under the Geneva Convention. I had to be returned to the country of birth under the laws of the -- the international laws. So I had to go back to Germany.

Q. After the war did your mother's sense of Jewish identity change at all?

A. What did you imply from my talk was her sense of Jewish identity before?

Q. Pretty much not.

A. Yes. I had mentioned that when she married my father, my father's family, sisters and including this Aunt Vally, my Swiss grandmother, they all thought

maybe it would be better for my father not to marry a Jewish woman. They asked her to transfer, to convert to Protestantism. At that point in 1917, under our way of thinking she was no longer Jewish. If you are not going to the synagogue and don't confess to being Jewish you are not Jewish period. So she had never known much about Jewish symbols. I don't think she had ever been in the synagogue. She knew less about Jewishness than I did. My grandparents didn't do that either. In fact my mother was a singer and sang in this cathedral I was talking about for Christmas. She sang Bach contatas, services at the Christian cathedral. She was part of that very much.

She escaped to England, but what she really thought about Jewish identity and all that I never really found out. I forced her to write her memoirs much later like in the '80s. She almost doesn't mention anything about the Jewish stuff, partially because she had to bury that real deep in her mind.

I probably told you last time that she came to England just a few days before the war started. At first she was a char woman, was cleaning floors. Eventually she got a teaching credential. Sometime in May, 1940 she got two letters from our relatives in Sweden. In summary, both letters said Dear Gertrude, I

guess you have heard that your father died on the 30th of May and, of course, you have known all along that your oldest son was killed in the war. Your brother Conrad has been underground in Holland. He's been questioned by the Gestapo several times. Your mother was recently transferred to a camp in Halle and your son Dieter has vanished. We don't know. It's possible he didn't survive the war in Poland. Everything else is all right. It's been raining a lot recently. Best regards.

Here is this woman sitting alone in a foreign country and in two letters she is told that practically her whole family has been wiped out and it turned out Conrad, her brother, and me, we were still alive. But everybody else was dead.

After that disaster she just refused to talk about it. I never convinced her to get some information of what happened to her mother, my grandmother.

Eventually I got the information from Israel, but she would never look at it. I don't think that made her in any way become more Jewish. She was anti-everything. She had nothing to do with political things, Jew, or Christian, she didn't want to hear another word. She wouldn't discuss it with me. Even ten years ago she didn't.

I know that she has contributed quite a bit to Jewish causes just to relieve her conscience and to try to help other people who were less lucky than we were.

Q. What about your feelings about being half Jewish? Did they change during the war?

A. The book that I wrote, I don't know whether you remember, on the front has two -- It's called Between Two Benches. The Jews were not permitted to use public transportation, so they had benches with a yellow star over here and normal Germans were sitting over on that bench. I wasn't Jewish and I wasn't really German, I was nothing. I was the little guy sitting in the dirt between the two benches.

I was certified to be a third class citizen, unworthy even to serve in the military. In a way unworthy -- not worthy of getting killed in the war for the greater glory of the German Reich.

Whether that gave me a sense of half Jewish and all that, I don't really remember, except when I came to this country I realized that the antisemitism in this country in a way was more potent than it was in Germany before Hitler. I had Jewish friends in Chicago who helped me get started as a doctor in Chicago and they drove me through Evanston at one time. Some

beautiful places. Ursula said to me --, I said that's a beautiful house. I would love to have this house. She said we can't live here. I said why? Why can't you? You don't have enough money? Oh, yes we have enough money. Jews are excluded. I said excluded? What do you mean? Well, Jews can't live here. I said who says? Why can't Mr. Miller sell you an apartment? She said our name gives us away; there is no way you can do that.

I have no idea in Germany, until Hitler came to power, nobody ever said Jews can't live here.

A couple other things happened. For instance, when I started practice in California a Jewish pediatrician in our community after a few weeks in practice came to me after hours and said can I talk to you?

I said yes.

He said I want to ask you are you Jewish or are you not?

I said what does that have to do with my practice?

He said I will tell you what it has to do with it. If you are not Jewish, I wouldn't dream of sending you any patients.

I said what?

You are Jewish and if I am Jewish you send me

patients and if I am not Jewish you won't send me any patients?

He said That's right. Especially when you are German I won't sent you any patients. The other doctors who are not Jewish they won't send you any patients either because with a name like Bergman they might assume you are Jewish. My buddy, I tell you something, you are in bad trouble. I think you are never going to make it. You might as well pack up and go someplace else.

That was one powerful impression how bad the underground non-verbalized antisemitism works. I have never known people would pick their doctor by their religion.

It's not a religion. Jewishness is not a matter of religion.

I said what is it? Is it ethnic? Is it blood like the Nazis say? Big discussions we had all the time.

In Chicago when I was working in a Jewish hospital, Mt. Sinai Hospital, it happened to me almost every day somebody would say Dr. Bergman is it? What kind of name is that? I said it's a name like any other name, like Miller.

She would say are you Jewish or are you

German?

I said what does that have to do with ovarian tumor? Why are you asking me these questions? She would say I don't want to be treated by non-Jewish doctors. I said what if I were the greatest gynecologist in the world and I am the only one who can save your life. Would you refuse me to operate on you?

She said yes I would. Okay.

I never understood what that means Jewish or German, because to me Jewish to me was a religion and German to me was a nationality. I still don't quite understand. I have a big discussion in that book about it. I am still confused about the whole issue.

Q. Can you talk about your Uncle Conrad a little bit, what you knew about him, what was happening to him, what you know did happen?

A. For?

Q. The underground.

A. Did you say Herman?

Q. Conrad.

A. Conrad was a very flamboyant young man. He would have fitted perfectly in Berkeley in the '60s. A super bright guy who did everything wild and wrong. He was so bright that he would pass, what do you call it, the bar, the first time around with straight A's. My

grandfather took him into his practice. He did a couple good jobs and he would disappear.

When we went to visit the grandparents in Naumburg and Conrad would happen to be there he would ride a motorcycle down the sidewalk, put my brother and me in front and back of him, and he would chase down the sidewalks fiddling around between the trees and the entrance gates at a speed of 60 miles, that all the local burghers would scream and get out of his way. We found it wonderful.

His parents disinherited him. It says in the will of my grandparents that he was disinherited because he lived in sin with some woman. I don't know who the woman is. I didn't see him often enough. He lived in another world.

Later on it seems he was probably homosexual and he lived in Holland and had some contact with a woman and some contact with a man. Maybe he was bisexual. I really don't know for sure.

I know some Dutch people who gave him shelter and he lived in the house. One of the people, a woman, is still a friend of mine. He started working underground in Holland for the anti-Nazi movement. He was questioned by the Gestapo several times. He had a hard time because he didn't have a steady income. He

didn't have a steady job. He couldn't get a job in wartime in a foreign country like Holland. Certainly not as a Jew he couldn't. But he did survive the war.

After the war he made contact with my mother in England. In 1948 or 49 I went to Holland to meet him and talk to him. It was a very moving moment for me because he was one of the only two people who survived the war in our family.

I now realize I never heard a nice friendly word from him because he wasn't particularly interested in his nephews. At any rate, we met at the railroad station in Rotterdam or someplace. I was waiting on the platform. He came up the steps and I had tears in my eyes. My dear uncle. He said hey, you. I am glad you have no hair like me. No what? No hair. The only thing he could think of. I was getting bald and he was bald to begin with. I bought him lunch. As usual he didn't have any money. Nothing of emotional depth or great love or affection was mentioned during the meal. I was rather bored with the man. He obviously with me. There was a difference in age of 19 or 20 years between us. It's a pity because he was brilliant and interesting and I kept asking him what happened at the Gestapo?

He said, oh, I'll be damned if I tell you

about that. That's about all I can tell you about Uncle Conrad, which is too bad.

I sometimes have dreams I would like to really talk. He must have been a fascinating character.

The woman in Geneva that sheltered him when they still lived in Holland didn't know very much about him either. What she did know she wouldn't tell me. I couldn't fill out that chapter.

He died in 1970 or so of natural causes, I think. I think he was a diabetic. I don't really know.

Q. How did it feel going back to Germany after so long?

A. I had stalled as long as I could, because I didn't want to go back. I applied to all kinds -- I have a folder of all my letters I applied to medical school in Sweden and Italy and Canada, in Israel and England. None of the conditions were suitable.

In England they told me yes, you can study medicine here. First all, the British soldiers have to get into the medical school. And then that stuff in the medical academy, your stuff you did in the beginning of the war in Germany is no good. You have to get started again at the bottom. This was in 1946. It will take you about three or four years to start premed and then it will take you another four or five years to get to

medical school and another four or five years before you are graduating and then taking specialty training. By that time you will be 48 years old. Forget it. I couldn't possibly afford that. I didn't have any money. My mother didn't either.

I had to go back to Germany anyhow. When I got back to Germany I was a designated victim of Nazi persecution and they treated those people quite well. I had a special ration card. Instead of one egg a month, not a dozen, one egg a month. Now I got two eggs a month. Instead of a quarter butter per week, I got a half pound of butter per week. A heating plate.

In addition, somebody had gotten my address through a Christian organization in Wisconsin. Every six weeks I got a Care package from them. It was the most marvelous thing you could get. They were wonderful things. Like 200 cigarettes. Considering that for five cigarettes you could pay your rent on your room for a month. For ten cigarettes you could hire yourself a bed partner for three weekends. So forth. It was practically worth it's weight in gold. I did quite well. I bullied the professors, the University people by saying you bastards, I know you were a Nazi and now you are a professor of internal medicine in Bonn. He said all right. All right. I have been exonerated by

the deNazification court. So they were a little more careful with me.

I passed everything with flying colors and squeezed a year and-a-half, squeezed two and-a-half years of medical school into one year and found somebody to accept my thesis. In 1947 I graduated. At the time I didn't feel very good about it, but it fortunately turned out I was bright enough anyway, and with a little more effort I would have deserved it and I didn't have any serious defect in my medical education anyway.

Q. You had mentioned in the tape before that you had earned extra money by crossing the green border between East and West Germany. I was wondering if you could describe that.

A. Since I had been a citizen of what was East Germany at that time, but now I was a citizen of West Germany, I had two sets of i.d.s. If I went from East Germany to West Germany, and the police caught me in the middle of the night in a dark forest and say what do you do here? I want to just crossover. They said where are you from? East Germany. No, go back to East Germany. That's where I wanted to go anyway.

So I went to East Germany, with a pocket full of, rucksack full of such things as movie film and watches and that sort of thing. I would pedal those

things in the East against food, like two dozen eggs. Fantastic richness.

You had to walk from the railroad station that had been moved away from the border. So people couldn't get accross the border at night. There was very strict police control. I had gotten very smart in finding places to walk, even though it was six, seven hours to walk in the dark, and the rain and through a forest and find your way to a railroad station over there. Today I couldn't even think of doing that.

My worst moment was when some guy said what do you have in there? I said some eggs. He said show me. Are they really eggs? Is that a real egg? Oh, yes that's a real egg. How about this one? Here I was standing, having five thousand marks worth of eggs in my back pack and he would crack all 24 eggs.

You were right. I hope I didn't inconvenience you. You are an honest citizen. You may go.

I was just about, my whole life savings and future was in those 24 eggs. I did that about eight or ten times. I really made a living from it. It was rather dangerous, real fascinating, real spicy story. I would carry little kids across rivers. Some mother who was exhausted, I would help her cross the other side. I

felt like a hero doing it. That was a green border. There was fabulous traffic going back and forth.

Q. Did you speak much about your experiences with your family?

A. My new family, wife and children? They were all a little bored by it. My children, for me it was ancient history. They were born more than ten years after the end of the war. This was like talking about Hannibal crossing the Alps to defeat Rome. It couldn't mean anything to them. There was a moment I never forget when my son at age ten or 12 said to me, hey Dad, what was the name of that guy over there?

I said what? What guy over where?

He said where. Austria. Wherever you came from.

Where I came from? Germany?

Yeah. What is the name of that guy? I said what guy? Adenauer?

He said No, before that. Hitler?

Yeah, Hitler, that's right. I thought that's incredible in the year 1965 some bright young man never heard the name Adolph Hitler. Not from me either. Apparently I was deficient in telling them about it. They didn't understand and didn't care.

My wife, I was together with her for 12

years. I guess she knew all that. We talked about that fairly frequently. She wasn't terribly impressed with my exploits. She was more impressed with the fact we had a nice new practice and a couple lovely kids and lived in a wonderful part of the world finally. This was all ancient history and the hell with it. Let's start a new life. It's been long enough to get out of Germany. Let's forget about all that and enjoy the fruits of liberty, freedom and pursuit of happiness.

It's interesting I didn't talk much about that. Not with my mother. To me it didn't mean much either. It's typical for old people to suddenly go back and try to retrace their steps. The reason all this came up, including writing my memoirs was really for the first time in my life I wasn't rushed by every day activity, and the job of an obstetrician isn't all that easy, getting up in the middle of the night. I love to travel. I am a musician. There wasn't any time to do anything else and think about the past. I didn't focus on these things. Now the kids were gone, the wife was gone, the job was gone. I had time to think and consider what had happened.

Q. Where did you meet your wife?

A. I met my wife shortly before I left Germany. It was really an overnight chemical thing. We both

thought we were madly in love with each other. I realized after a few months of being together with her, and having another lady friend, girlfriend, I realized that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life with either one of them. So one day I said by the way, I have to report at the ship in Bremerhaven tomorrow morning. It was nice meeting you. Bye. She was just shocked.

The next thing I know, a year later she more or less showed up at my doorstep in Chicago. Somehow we got married because the old chemistry flared up again. Obviously I was lonely in Chicago. I didn't know many people or any people at all hardly. She was a piece of home. She knew more about me and my family than anybody else and it helped me to get started in my new country.

She still lives in the same house in the East Bay where my kids started kindergarten, which seems strangely enough is about eight minutes to walk from my present home. It's very strange. In Castro Valley.

Q. What was the most difficult part of your experience looking back?

A. Well, the most difficult part was to grow up in a high class society and suddenly, practically overnight, being told that I was trash, I didn't fit into society, neither here nor there, to be made to be a

pariah. It's like saying in a white family one of the kids had a black father and suddenly it turns out the kid only looks white, but actually he is a mixed blood, a Negro, and how that kid would feel when somebody confronts him with it. His buddies in school says you are a Negro or something like that. That's about how I felt. That was probably the worst part of it. Lack, loss of self respect.

Everything else was more or less tolerable. I was happy to survive that most difficult part.

It's an interesting question. I didn't think anything was all that catastrophic. That's hindsight.

In a way it's the episode of the Nazi commandant in Halle catching me in my grandmother's room. Two or three nights without sleep. That's probably the closest I came to dispair. Maybe if you have read my book there was a night when I was -- There was one night when I was attacked by Nazis in the same camp and almost killed and another night when I was gang raped by a bunch of Nazis, A bunch of Germans in that camp. Possibly that was one of my worst experiences. That seems to be part of prisoners anywhere.

Q. What happened?

A. What happened?

Q. Yeah.

A. This has really very little to do with the Holocaust and I would just as soon not get this on the tape here. If somebody wants to know about it they can read my book.

Q. I know your son is now living in Germany. I wonder if that's been -- How that has been for you?

A. When my kids were getting ready to fly the coop I told them, look, I am a doctor with a very nice income and I don't want you guys to feel that you have to rush right into a job and make money next year. Certainly I support you in college. I would rather have you knock around for a year and get to know the world, travel and visit your mother's relatives. My wife was German. My daughter wanted to go to Israel and live in a kibbutz. I told them I would support you for an extra year to knock around and find your way in life and have a misfired love affair or screw around a little bit, whatever you want to do. So that you get to master life before you get into the straight jacket of a job.

That is what they did. My daughter went to Kenya for a year, was studying behavior of black matriarchial society outside of Mombassa and lived with them for a year and learned to speak Swahili. She is still trying to write a book about it.

My son went to Germany and worked in the

place of his uncle. He wanted to go into that and this and he wanted to be an environmentalist and wanted to produce beer and wanted to do this, that and the other. Eventually he applied to medical school and he was accepted to everybody's surprise. His grades were good, but not fantastic. In this country, with his grades he couldn't have gotten into U.C. first crack because he was spoiled in high school where he and my daughter both were by far the brightest kids in Hayward. They never did homework. They always came back with top grades. They didn't know from nothing.

If I asked them today about some simple facts of life they didn't really learn anything in high school.

At any rate, he was accepted in medical school and became a doctor in Germany. Later I found out that at the end of World War II Allied educational authorities decided that Germans -- It had been the habit of German universities to have the old folks, the alumni, bring their kids into medical school. Almost all students in German medical schools were children of wealthy people or professional people or had relations of some sort with the Minister of Health in Bavaria or whatever.

There were very few blue collar workers who

ever got into medical school. The Allied Forces said look, you have to take people into medical school according to their intellectual ability and their potential of becoming doctors regardless of how much money their parents have.

In addition to that, you have to start taking three percent non-Germans into medical school. Unheard of in Germany. Never had a Japanese or Romanian in a German medical school for centuries. So Cliff suddenly got in there, because he was non-German. He was American. He didn't know that at first either. I didn't either. I never really discussed it with him. I think he knows that now. Maybe he would have passed anyhow. If I listened to his German now I am surprised he ever passed all the boards. But he did very well.

What was the question I am hanging around with?

Q. I was asking about how that made you feel living in Germany?

A. One of the fascinating things is that both my son and I, at age 32, left the country of our birth and went to the other country. He from America to Germany and me from Germany to America, with a new language, new job, medical school, new wife or girlfriend and whole new set of circumstances. It's amazing to look at that.

We both did well adjusting to the new situation.

How do I feel about him living over there? He has a wonderful job, which he couldn't have gotten in this country.

Besides that, there is another factor that is very delightful. Namely, medical school is free in Germany, except for textbook and room and board, but you pay no student fees at all. He probably saved me a hundred twenty thousand dollars by not going to Stanford or someplace. So I am grateful for that.

He has enough money and I have enough money that we can get together. I have been seeing him at least once a year all these years. He comes over here on business trips. He is bilingual medical editor of one of the two top medical publishers in Germany. T-h-i-e-m-e. We both talk a great deal about how bilingual our speaking talents are. We have been sitting together and chatting at full speed and people were astonished the way we talked. We never knew whether we were speaking English and German at the time. We would sometimes start talking a sentence in English and a German word comes in. Suddenly we speak German again for another two minutes. People sit around and laugh.

What did I say funny? I didn't even know I

was speaking German.

That in itself is a good thing you could make money with it as bilingual interpreter at the United Nations or something.

At any rate he would rather live in California, but his wife is a potter in Munich and doesn't want to live here. Too much pottery in Berkeley anyway. No children because they don't want to put children into this miserable world. My daughter doesn't want kids. I guess we don't have any grandchildren. I have to borrow some from my friends every once in a while.

Q. Looking back at the war is there anything when you look back you felt ashamed of at the time?

A. Well, I showed you the picture of the Brothers show earlier. Yes, I feel ashamed of the fact that I didn't have the courage to live according to an anti-Nazi ideology, which was not very clear to me in the beginning, but it sure became clear later on.

There was one episode that I described where we went to the State opera in Berlin at one time in 1936 or so. Before the opera started suddenly the orchestra played the national anthem. Everybody got up and turned around because Adolph Hitler was up there in the Emperor's Lodge. Everybody stood up and greeted the

great Fuhrer of the German Reich. Shortly before the opera was over, during the last chord in the orchestra, my brother and I rushed back and up the stairs to the Emperor's Lodge entrance and when we opened the door there was Adolph Hitler with two or three other people like Goebbels and an adjutant coming right at us, as far away from us as he is from me. I am one of the few people I know who really have seen this man close up.

He was very impressive and a powerful personality, tremendous charisma. Of course, we both stood there and saluted him. I described that in my book. A friend of mine, who is 50 now. In other words, he was born after Hitler. He said I read that in your book. I didn't know you were a Nazi.

I said what? Because I said Heil Hitler?

He said, of course. If you weren't a Nazi you shouldn't do that. I said what do you think happened in the Berlin Opera House if two young men are standing there and saying good morning, Mr. Hitler.

They would have put me in the concentration camp and that would have been the end of me. I am a coward in this kind of a political pressurized country you have only a choice of running along with the crowd, trying to hide a little bit or to be a rebel. If you are a rebel you will get hanged like the siblings in

school. If you ask me what I am not proud of I went along with it, but, because, as you know, there were 50 million other Germans running along, too. There is no way you can convince me that there were 50 million Nazis in Germany. Most of these people weren't. If they had the courage they should have had Hitler would never have gotten even as far as he got by the beginning of the war. But that's the power of persuasion and fear and whatever. I am not proud of that.

Q. Is there anything else you want to talk about that we haven't talked about yet?

A. No. A couple more stories attached to the photos. That would probably cover just about everything I can possibly say. It might be after I have listened to both of my tapes one of these days. I am tired to listen to this person on a video. I just hated every minute of it.

I guess I should and make myself some notes. I might realize there is something, an amendment I might put in later.

Can you add to a video if I made some serious mistakes I want to correct?

This is a picture of my mother, my Jewish mother sitting with her new baby. On the right is myself, my older brother is on the left.

Q. Where are you? Where is this taken?

A. I don't know. Probably on the balcony in our summer house in Germany.

My mother, that was 1928. This was a picture that she used for applications for jobs. She was a teacher of French and English and music teacher, voice teacher. She used to put that photo in her application.

That's a picture of my father with the one year old son, me, in Leipzig, the town where I was born and grew up.

My father was a professor of philosophy. That's one of the few pictures we have of him with one of his children.

That's a picture of my grandparents with their daughter. My mother is sitting on the edge of the chair far to the right. Grandfather Landsberg, a judge in Naumburg, is sitting there in the old grandfather chair in his study. Grandmother is sitting in the other chair. That was in 1939 just before the war broke out.

A larger picture of grandfather Landsberg at his desk where he was doing all his legal work.

That is my Uncle Konrad, who was in his mid-30s at the time. Also an attorney who ran away and lived underground in Holland. Had a very colorful history, most of which is not known to me.

This is my grandmother a couple years, three years before she died, when she was in charge of the paralegal office in her hometown in Naumburg and driving a car, learning to drive at age 58 or so. She could cook and type, just everything.

This is a somewhat earlier picture of my grandmother with her grandson, my brother in 1938 when he was 20.

The other picture in here, the last photo we have of my grandmother in 1942, about a year or so before she vanished and was eventually exterminated in Auschwitz.

This is the house in Naumburg, Germany where my grandparents lived from 1919 to 1941. The house was sold under pressure, with the receipts from the house taken away by the Nazi government. So nothing was left of it. Wonderful house.

The bottom was the chauffeur's apartment, with a couple paralegal offices, secretaries.

The next floor was rented out to some old friends.

The next floor, which in Germany was called the second floor, the main living quarters of the family. The two windows at the top were the guest rooms where little people like my brother and I would sleep

and hear the opera base recording underneath.

My wealthy grandparents were rather well known in town, in a town of thirty thousand people, for having one of three super cars. This one an old Mercedes from 1922. You see the chauffeur sitting at the wheel. My brother sitting in the back and I was standing up on the side in this fancy car we were very proud to be driven around in.

This is a much more recent picture of my mother, who lived to the late '80s in this country. These are my children. The boy in the middle Cliff, born in 1955. The girl in front, Jeanne, born in 1957. So this picture was taken in 1963, I believe, in our backyard in Castro Valley.

A picture of myself. I am a little embarrassed about it, because everybody thinks I am a little girl. But it was typical for mamas in the mid twenties in Germany to dress up even their little boys like they were cute little semi-females. Somewhat androgynous. Still a pretty good picture, including that strange cuplet over the forehead, playing with a train in my grandfather's house.

A few years later. That is myself again in the uniform, with a couple Swastikas hanging around. I was in the medical company of the infantry regiment in

Leipzig at age 18. Handsome and dashing, of course.

Just for the record, this is a picture of my older brother Ulrich in 1936 when he was 18, with two family dogs. A huge big Saint Leonard, which was a mixture of Newfoundland and Saint Bernard. This little guy, Dachshund. Those two guys were a standard feature of the household of my grandparents in Naumburg and were more appreciated than either of the kids.

I think my brother, a couple years later, was a student of physics. In 1940 he joined the military and was killed in May, 1940 when the Nazi armies marched into Belgium.

This is the site of the Kristallnacht disaster I described in my book at first. That's corner of the main square in Leipzig. Actually this is a picture that was taken later when Leipzig was bombed to smithereens in December, 1943.

The building I just showed you has since been torn down and you see on the left side the University church, the main building of the University of Leipzig, which has been founded in his 1409. A little while before the United States was discovered by Columbus.

It was torn down in the late '60s by the Communist government because they didn't tolerate churches.

The building on the right is also important in my history because this was a Jewish department store, Bamberger and Hertz. That was set afire in the Kristallnacht, but was rebuilt much later. The story of the Kristallnacht takes place on this square in this very area. That's why I took this picture. I recently talked to Mr. Bamberger who has gotten possession of the building again and is a prominent citizen of Leipzig.

This is our high school graduation picture, 1938 of our high class humanistic so-called high school in Leipzig. This picture took on a particular interest when I was ready to leave Germany in 1952. I went to the American consul, who had a less than perfect IQ apparently, to get my visa.

He said you must have been in the Hitler Youth. All German boys were in the Hitler Youth. I said No, I wasn't.

He said if you weren't, there are only three possibilities. Either you were in the Hitler Youth, you were killed as a Jew or you were a Nazi collaborator.

I said I certainly wasn't a Nazi collaborator. As far as being killed, would you give me a visa if I were dead?

He said heh?

I said I can prove to you I was not in the

Hitler Youth.

He said everybody was in the Hitler Youth.

I said no, I wasn't. I called my stepmother in Berlin and said isn't there a picture around when we graduated in 1938? She found this picture.

There are 20 guys on this picture and our class teacher, Mr. Books. There are three girls in there.

You can see that some of the kids, most of the kids have an earth color uniform, Hitler Youth. Three of them have a black uniform on. They are future SS people. There are three girls in front, about whom I have written one of my better stories in my book.

You notice that two of the people are in civilian clothes. This fellow up in front, up on top, the fifth from the left, was a Catholic character, whose parents refused to let him join the Hitler Youth. Somehow he survived. I talked to him a few months ago and met him last year in Germany. He was Catholic. This guy was one of the true heroes because he and three other Catholic kids in this town would get up in the middle of the night and sneak around town and tear down Nazi propaganda posters and spray red paint over Nazi slogans. Occasionally they would spray the word (in German) which means to death with all Nazis. He was

never caught, because he would obviously have been instantly executed if somebody had caught him.

The other guy in civilian suit is on the bottom way on the right and that is me.

I could prove to the idiotic consul that I was really not in any uniform. Then I got my visa eventually. Out of these people in the picture, 20 plus, there are only about seven still alive.

The story of the three girls was fascinating.

There is one fellow way up on top on the left side. My good buddy Albrecht, whom I spent a couple days with, way up on top. When I showed him the picture, he said to me Do you know why I stand sideways? So you can't see the swastika on my left arm because I wasn't a Nazi. I'll be damned if I am seen with a swastika.

He returned -- He was a soldier in the Army of what is his name? German Field Marshall Rommell, in Africa. Albrecht was a big shot officer in Africa, and was captured at El Alamein, or one of these places, and was sent to America as a prisoner of war. He was in an officers prisoner of war camp in Texas. They had a wonderful life. In fact, they took a correspondence course at the University of Texas or someplace and he almost had enough credits to become an American lawyer.

He got a good suntan because he spent much of the time lying around in the sun. He was getting fat because the food was good.

Eventually he was exchanged shortly after the end of the war. It so happened I was in Leipzig at the time. Some little guy came on his bicycle to my house and he said Dieter, Albrecht got in town yesterday. He said for you to come over. I went over to Albrecht's that same evening and we sat together and talked all evening, had a couple bottles of wine. It was wonderful reunion. I have known this guy since 1930, which is now 66 years. So we would have a wonderful new life.

I went home, with my bike. The next morning the little guy came over again and said please come quick. Something terrible happened. Soviet military authorities marched into Albrecht's house at five in the morning and arrested him because Communists presumed that all officers, all German officers, by definition are party members, Nazis. They arrested him and sent him to Siberia. So he was gone for three or four years.

When I got to the house -- His father had been a social democratic editor, who had died I think in a concentration camp. One of his brothers was killed in the war. A second brother had died of tuberculosis or was still alive at that point. When his mother found

out Albrecht has been taken away by the Soviet military government she turned on the gas and killed herself. I walked in there she was lying dead on the floor. I didn't hear from Albrecht for years until he was discharged several years later.

Everybody was dead, except the fiance of one of his brothers in Mannheim and took him in and nursed him back to moderate spiritual, psychological health. He had been the best student in our class. He eventually learned enough to be a mediocre accountant. After years in the Soviet Union there wasn't much chance to be anything better than that.

Eventually he made a pretty good income in the factory. He was an accountant in Mannheim. Now he is back to normal at his age and we are good buddies again.

That was one of the more harassing stories. If you have six, seven, eight, nine hours I can tell you another six or seven stories of these people in the picture.

As a matter of fact, I have to start writing those stories down in another book.

With that I will sign off.

Thank you very much.