[LAUGHS] Coffee we do, [INAUDIBLE]. We don't do that.

I have one.

Oh, OK.

[LAUGHTER]

It's not worth the trouble.

OK.

Dr. Bergman, I was wondering if when you were with the Organization Todt, did anyone ever talk about escaping?

Well, actually, it was discussed. Everybody, always, whenever you are confined someplace, you talk about it to your friends. And 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 semester, 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 the field hospital. And every year, about half of them got killed or wounded and disappeared from the scene. And eventually, I was one of the two out of 10 who survived in medical school.

And 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 were just killed by fire bombing and all that in the cities.

And 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.

And you run away to where? You know the heroic stories of Dutch people, and Bulgarian people, and Anne Frank, and so forth, sheltering people, Jews behind double doors, and splitting their miserable rations with those Jews living upstairs someplace. And every time somebody coughs, they bring the wrath of the party to them. It was a miserable life for everybody.

At least we had reasonably decent beds and food. And in this great concentration camp called Germany, there was really no way to escape. Some of us had friends someplace.

And one of my buddies made friends with a French girl. And she almost got him out of France. And we were walking on the cliffs of Calais, from which you would look across the channel and see the white cliffs of Dover. And my buddy Andre and I, we would dream of why can't we just swim across this channel and run off. But we never did.

A couple of 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. And so they discharged him from this particular camp.

As a matter of fact, he got wounded in an air raid. And well, the rest of us were fine, you know? And we didn't see much point in escaping.

Eventually, as I told you last time, when it came close to the wire, just shortly after the invasion, a buddy of mine and I, we escaped anyway. Because I wanted to get to England because my mother was living in England, the only relative that I still had left from the family. I didn't know at the time how to get to England. And it turned out to be reasonably easy.

But this was not a concentration camp catastrophe. It was a very rough life and hard labor and not enough food and not

enough sleep and miserable. But 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. Well, they didn't want to kill us. They wanted us to build a West wall and try to prevent the invasion.

What were the ages of most of the people who were with you?

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 West Western wall. And they were much older.

And I have no idea what-- 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 sakes. And what's happened to them, I have no idea. We were all my age or a little older, not much.

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

So I wonder if you could describe that day that you escaped. What happened? Well,

The Americans and a group of French, I forgot what the nationalities were that occupied that, marched into the Pas de Calais. We had to occupy, to capture the sites where the V2 bombs were built and sent off to England. They had some fabulous underground shelters where they built those things. And of course, this was right where we had our camp, so we had to be moved away. And so in the middle of the night, or late in the evening, we were marched, a whole bunch of us, down the street, with big bomb holes in the street, to another location somewhere.

And pretty soon it turned out to my buddy Willie Waldfrum-- I don't know whether I should mention names. Is this kind of a report-- isn't going to be available to almost anybody, is it? I'll just see my buddy Willie and leave out the last name. I don't know. I don't have his permission to that.

He's was a big strong, down-to-earth fellow. And I was the brains in the combination. And we decided that during the march and the darkness, don't forget it was wartime and nobody had any full lights on, and you couldn't see anything. And as people with the guns that were guiding us, they couldn't see everybody, either.

So we decided we would slowly, between 11 and 1 in the morning, move our way back in the column to kind of get to the end of it. And then at one fine moment, we realized we were going to cross a little river over a bridge. And by giving each other a little signal, we suddenly dived over the bridge to the streets underneath the bridge and just stayed there with our feet up to our knees in water and just without moving, to see whether anybody had noticed that we had disappeared.

And apparently nobody had. We were careful and very quiet. So we just kind of stayed there for several hours, maybe.

About an hour after we had separated from the troops, there was a funny shifting light coming down the street behind us. And I realized that the dreaded commandant of the camp was running a bike and catching up with the troop, with the group. And 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. And 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. And so it was a safe case to do.

And I've been thinking about it for half a century, kicking myself that I was such a coward, and that I didn't even kill

one of these bastards. You know, I should have. And it probably wouldn't have made any difference, because there were 280,000 bastards in Germany. And one more or less wouldn't have made any difference.

Then we waited a little longer. And then we worked our way out of the river and tried to orient ourselves in the darkness to find out how we-- what now. Now you have escaped, what you do.

So we happened to see a French farmhouse a couple of hours later with one little light shining in the kitchen, or wherever it was. And we decided-- Willie decided, who spoke pretty good French, to go to the back door and rap at the back door. And it so happened that the sign he gave, whatever it was, was understood by the local people that 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 kind of flashlight. And Willie explained where we were. And obviously, he didn't look like an escaped soldier or like a Nazi.

And they put us in the hayloft in their stables behind the house. And 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 it happens that later on in the night, a bunch of Germans came in with a tank. At that time, it was still occupied by the German military. And when you're sitting there drinking beer, and suddenly there are some stuff coming down from the hay loft, you wonder whether it's just a cat or whether there are some people up there.

And you couldn't cough, either. We almost-- and also, sometimes you have to burp or something worse. And I have a sentence in my book that says he gave up his life because of a misplaced fart.

And they would have heard it. We heard every word they said down below. And that was a horrible night, trying not to move.

And at any rate, we were not discovered. And the next day, or two days later, they put us in the bottom of 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. And we were kept in the basement.

And that's where we, a few days later, heard the victory celebration, including the British anthem. And then, eventually, we were at Todt, we were turned over to the British military. And that was the end of the war for us.

OK. I was wondering if you could describe the first POW camp that you went to, just actually describe a typical day in that, what that was like.

There were two first days, the first day in [INAUDIBLE] in Abbeville. We were they put all the Germans in the courtyard at the local jail. And many of the German soldiers had thrown off their uniforms and pretended to be prisoners, or they pretended to be civilians.

And I was a civilian. And 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 in the wall. And suddenly I realized that there were 20 or 30 of us standing in the courtyard of the prison with their face to the wall. And behind us, some Tommy with a submachine gun was just getting ready to crack his machine gun. And I knew for a fact that next thing I would hear some brrrr and that would be the end of Dieter Bergman.

So like an idiot, I turned around. And in my somewhat deficient English said, hey, sir, wait a minute. Now wait a minute. I need to talk to you.

And I marched right up to that machine gun. And everybody thought I must have been out of my mind. And the British lieutenant says, hold the fire. What do you want? What's your name?

And I said, this fellow there, Willie and I, we are escaped prisoners from Organization Todt. I even have a documentation of our meal ticket here. And the man apparently believed us. And he took us out of the line up and put us in a prison cell. And did not lock the cell.

And I said, sir, will you do me a favor? Are you going to be here for a couple of days? He says, yes, of course.

Will you please lock the cell that the real Germans in these other cells don't come in and disembowel us in the middle of the night because they know that we are the anti-Nazis and we have been their enemy. So they locked us up and they gave us some food for a few days. That was the first day of POW, sort of. We weren't civilians, so we still were called POWs.

And then they shipped us with some lorries away from the city of Abbeville, down the streets. And we had to stand up in the truck. And people threw all kinds of things at us, including rocks and chamber pots, and you name it.

And then we were put in a barbed wire enclosure in the middle of a huge field. We figured there were, I don't know, I forgot the figure. I had figured out 3,000 people, Germans, standing in the field, enclosed by barbed wire. There was barely enough room to get all of us to stand up there.

And there was no room to sit down, no toilet facilities, no water. And it was raining cats and dogs. And we stood, 3,000 of us, we stood day and night on a soggy field, wet through the skin from rain.

And for my medical sense, I'm still amazed we were told when you get wet you get cold and get pneumonia and you die. And there were 3,000 people, wet through for three days and night, no food, no doctors, no medication. We didn't even have a place to go to the bathroom. And none of us seemed to get sick.

But eventually, we were interviewed by some British people, And I went to a British officer and says, I'm so glad I can enter [? probation ?] officer-- intelligence officer, call it in England, I guess-- and I said, I'm so glad I finally-- you asked me the first day. And there were three first days. And I'm coming to the third first day now.

I said, I'm so glad I finally see an officer. I'm not a Nazi. And I'm not a soldier. And I just want to go to England, to the wonderful country where my mother lives.

And he said to me, you Nazis are all the same. You are liars. And I've never seen anybody who wasn't Nazi.

You are all civilians. You all wonderful anti-Nazis. Get the hell out of my office. And he just threw me out.

And the only way I could get to England at this point, eventually I convinced this man, is that I would join-- at that time, the only prisoners that were-- didn't I talk about all that when I was here before? Maybe I did.

Anyway, most standard prisoners were sent to America at the time. And only the politically unstable ones, the 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. And so that's how I got to England. That's when I met this British officer who said, you German bastards are all the same.

But at any rate, I was put in the regular POW camp. And for the first time in five months, I had a real meal, real food, and the whole thing, kippers, and eggs, and coffee, and cream, and cereal, and milk. And you name it, the British were very generous in the reception camp.

And we all just gorged ourselves on this wonderful food. And 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 the prisoner of war camp in England. Things got better after that.

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

Part of the 2 and 1/2 years or so I was in as a civilian in England were a semblance of medical school, including pre-med studying. The international Red Cross said had gotten hold of some kind of group of buildings in one of the prisoner of war camps where they would establish an International Academy of the Red Cross there. The idea was that, first of all, they wanted to give some of us something to do so we wouldn't just stand around and hate the British.

So number two, they knew that they could get some goodwill for Germany by giving us a chance to learn something. So they established a medical school and hired a half a dozen college professors who had knowledge about chemistry, and physics, and botany, and biology, and physics. And they were teaching us pre-med.

And that was the hardest studying I've ever done, since I knew nothing about medicine. And they really drilled us. And we had all day long to sit there. And when lousy copies of somebody's handwritten notes, trying to learn something about pre-med. That was just part of it.

The rest of the time I was in-- I think I was in a total of 9, 10, 11 different camps. And the reason for the transfers was, number one, medical school was established. Number two, the British thought that nobody should stay in the same place too long and make too many contacts, maybe, with the outside.

And the third reason was that eventually I ended up in-- I was still in a Nazi camp where all the real Nazis were. And they found out pretty soon that I was kind of a shaky character. I was not a real Nazi. I couldn't 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.

So one night, a buddy of mine was attacked and almost killed. And the same night I was captured in singing in a choir. And I was almost killed by a bunch of Nazi prisoners of war.

That was so powerful that even somebody wrote a letter to The Times and to the House of Commons. And there was a question at the House of Commons in Camp so-and-so, we understand several people were killed by Nazis, incarcerated Nazis. And what does the Interior Secretary think about security for foreign nationals that are under our protection?

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

Now I was transferred to the wonderful anti-Nazi camp where all the real liberal democratic people had been sent to. And that was a dung heap of humanity. The first day they stole my watch. And every day you had to watch for your belongings.

And the food was lousy. It was dirty. And you lost your pillow. And you lost everything, stole my pants, and stole shoes. And it was a mess.

Eventually, I got to be a German camp interpreter of some sorts. And then I had a better case. And 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. And then 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, the international laws. And so I eventually had to go back to Germany.

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

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

Pretty much none.

Yes. I had mentioned that when she married my father, my father's family, sisters, and including this Aunt Vali and my

Swiss grandmother, they all thought maybe it would be better for my father not to marry a Jewish woman. So they asked her to transfer, to convert to Protestantism. And at that point in 1917, under our way of thinking, she was no longer Jewish. If you are not going to the Israeli-- to the synagogue, and don't confess to being Jewish, you are not Jewish, period.

And so she had never known much about Jewish symbols. She had never-- I don't think she had ever been in the synagogue. She knew less about Jewishness than I did.

My grandparents didn't do any of that, either. In fact, my mother was a singer. And she sang in this cathedral I'm talking about for Christmas. And she sang Bach cantatas at services at the Christian cathedral. And she was part of that, very much so. And she escaped to England.

What she really thought about Jewish identity and all that, I never really found out. So I forced her to write her memoirs much later, like, in the '80s. And she almost doesn't mention anything about the Jewish stuff, partially because she had buried 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. And at first, she was a char woman, who was cleaning floors. And eventually, she got a teaching credential.

And sometime in May, 1940, she got two letters from our relatives in Sweden. In some reports, 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 older son was killed in the war. Your brother Conrad has been underground in Holland. And he has 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 that he didn't survive the war in Poland. Everything else is all right here. It's been raining a lot recently. Best regards, Erna.

And here's this woman sitting. And in two letters, she gets a note that said practically her whole family has been wiped out. And it turned out that Conrad, her brother and me, we were still alive. But everybody else was dead.

And 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. So I don't think that made her in any way become more Jewish. She just was anti-everything. She had nothing to do with political things.

Jew or Christian, she didn't want to hear another word. She didn't even discuss it with me. Even 10 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. OK?

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

The book that I wrote, I don't know whether you remember, on the front has two-- it's called Between Two Branches. And 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.

And I wasn't Jewish. And I wasn't really German. And I was nothing. I was a little guy sitting in the dirt between the two benches.

And 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. And whether that to me has 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.

And 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 what? Why can't you? Don't we have enough money?

She said, oh, yes. We have enough money. But this is excluded. I said, excluded, what do you mean?

Well, Jews can't live here. I said, well, who says, why can't Mr. Miller sell you an apartment, Mrs. Mandelstein, who tells him not to? She says, there's no way you can do that. I had no idea in Germany, as far as I know, until Hitler came to power, nobody ever says Jews can't live here.

And then a couple of other things happened. For instance, when I started practice, a Jewish pediatrician in our community, after a few weeks in practice, he came to me after hours. And says, hey, can I talk to you? I said yes.

He said, I want to ask you, are you Jewish or are you not? I says, what does that have to do with my practice? He says, well, I'll 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'm Jewish, you'll send me patients. And if I'm not Jewish, you won't send me any patients?

He said, that's right. Especially when you are German, I won't send you any patients. And 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.

And my buddy, I tell you something, you are in bad trouble. And I think you're never going to make it. And you might as well pack up and go someplace else.

That was one powerful impression how bad underground, non-verbalized antisemitism, in this case, in the opposite, works. And I'd never known that people would pick their doctor by their religion. And he said, it's not a religion. And Jewishness is not a matter of religion.

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

And in Chicago, when I was working in a Jewish hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital, this happened to me almost every day, that somebody would say, Dr. Bergman? Bergman, is it? What kind of name is that?

I said, it's a name like any other name, like Miller and Schultze. And she would say, are you Jewish or are you German? I said, what does that have to do with your ovarian tumor? Why are you asking me these questions?

And she would say, well, I don't want to be treated by non-Jewish doctors. What if I'm the greatest gynecologist in the world, and I'm the only one can save your life. Would you refuse to have me operate on you? She says, yes, I would. OK.

And several of these instances, I never understood whether-- what that means, Jewish or German. Because Jewish to me was a religion. And German to me was a nationality.

And I still don't quite understand. I have a big discussion in that book about it. And I'm still confused about the whole issue.

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

For?

Your uncle who was underground.

Did you say Herman?

Conrad?

Conrad, yes. Conrad was a very flamboyant young man. He would have fitted perfectly in Berkeley in the '60s, a super bright guy who did everything, everything wild and wrong.

He was so bright that he would pass a-- law the what you call it-- the first time around with straight A's. And my grandfather took him into his practice. And he did a couple of good jobs. And then he would disappear.

And when we went to visit the grandparents in Naumburg, and Konrad [PERSONAL NAME] happened 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 the speed of 60 miles that all the local burgers would just scream and get out of his way. And we found it wonderful.

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

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

But I know some Dutch people who gave him shelter. And he lived at their house. Wonderful people, the woman is still a friend of mine.

And he started working underground in Holland for the anti-Nazi movement. And he was questioned by the Gestapo several times. And he had a hard time because he didn't have a steady income. And he didn't have a steady job. You couldn't get a job in wartime in a foreign country like Holland and certainly not as a Jew, he couldn't.

But he did survive the war. And after the war, he made contact with my mother in England. And in 1948 or '49, I went to Holland to meet him and talk to him. And it was a very moving moment for me, because he was one of the only two people-- and me who survived the war in our family.

And I now realize that I'd never heard a nice, friendly word from him because he wasn't particularly interested in his nephews. And at any rate, we met at the railroad station in Rotterdam or someplace. And I was waiting under the platform.

And he came up the steps. And I had tears in my eyes, my dear uncle. He said, hey, you! I'm glad you have no hair, like me. No what? No hair. Oh.

The only thing he could think of that I was getting bald and he was bald to begin with. And I bought him lunch, because as usual, he didn't have any money. And nothing of emotional depth or great love or affection was mentioned during the meal.

And I was rather bored with the man. And he, obviously, with me. There was a difference in age of 19 or 20 years between us.

And it's a pity. Because he was brilliant and interesting. And I kept asking him what happened with the Gestapo. He said, oh, I'd be damned if I tell you about that.

And that's about all I can tell you about Uncle Conrad, which is too bad. I sometimes have dreams that I would like to really talk with. He must have been a fascinating character.

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

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

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

I had stalled as long as I could, because I didn't want to go back. I had applied to all kinds of-- I had a folder with all my letters that I'd applied to medical school in Sweden, and in Italy, and in Canada, and all over the place, in Israel, and in England. And nobody, none of the conditions were suitable.

In England, they told me, yes, you can study medicine here. But first, all the British soldiers have to get into the medical school. And then that stuff in the medical academy and your stuff that you did in the beginning of the war in Germany is no good. You have to get started again at the bottom. And this was in 1946.

And it will take you about three or four years to start pre-med. And then it would take you another four or five years to get to medical school. And it'll take another five years before you are finished and taking specialty training. And by that time, you will be 48 years old.

And forget it, you know. I couldn't possibly afford it. I didn't have any money. My mother didn't, either.

Eventually, I had to go back to Germany, anyhow. When I got back to Germany, I was now a victim of Nazi persecution. And they treated those people quite well.

I had a special ration card. And instead of one egg a month, not a dozen, one egg a month, I now got two eggs a month. And instead of a quart of butter per week, I got a half a pound of butter a week and a heating plate.

And in addition to it, somebody had gotten my address through a Christian organization in Wisconsin. And every six weeks I got a care package from them. And that was the most marvelous thing you could ever get.

There were these wonderful things in there, like, 200 cigarettes. And considering that for five cigarettes you could pay your rent in your room for a month, and for 10 cigarettes you could hire yourself a bed partner for three weekends, and so forth. It was practically worth its weight in gold. So I did quite well.

And I bullied the professors and the university people by saying, you bastards. I know that you were Nazi. And now you're a professor of internal medicine in Bonn?

And he says, all right, all right, all right, all right. I've been exonerated by the de-nazification court. And so they were a little more careful with me. And I passed everything and with flying colors. And squeezed a year and a half-- and squeezed 2 and 1/2 years of medical school into 1 year, and found somebody to write my thesis.

And in 1947, I graduated. And 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 defects in my medical education, anyway. Yeah.

You had mentioned in the tape before that you had earned extra money by crossing the Green border between East and West Germany. So I was wondering if you would just describe that, what that was like.

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 IDs. And if I went from West Germany to East Germany, when the police caught me in the middle of the night in a dark forest and say, what do you do here? I say, I want to just cross over. And 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 pocketful of, or rucksack full of such things as movie film, and watches, and that sort of thing. And I would pedal those things on the East against food, you know, like, two dozen eggs, fantastic riches.

And my worst night was-- and you had to walk from-- the railroad stations had been moved away from the border so that people couldn't just cross the border at night. There was a very strict police control. And I had gotten pretty smart in finding little places to walk.

Even though it was 6, 7, 8 hours to walk in the dark and the rain and through a forest and find your way to a railroad station over there, it was really-- today, I couldn't even think of doing that. And my worst moment was when some guy said what you have in there. And I said some eggs. Show me. Are they really eggs?

And so he would open the box of eggs. Is that a real egg? Yes. And he went, [CRACKS EGG] oh, yes. It's a real egg. And how about this one? [CRACKS EGG]

And here I was standing, having 5,000 marks worth of eggs in my backpack. And he would crack all 24 eggs. [CRACKS EGGS]

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

And I was just about ready to-- my whole life savings, and my future was in those 24 eggs. And I did that about 8 or 10 times. And I really made a living from it. But it was quite a dangerous and fascinating, also a real spy story, in a way.

I once in a while would carry some little kids across rivers. And some mother who had exhaustedly fallen apart, I would help her to get across to the other side. And I felt like a hero doing it. That was a green border. And there was a fabulous traffic going back and forth.

Did you speak much about your experiences with your family?

My new family, wife and children?

Mhm.

They were all a little bored by it. And my children, for me, that was all ancient history. They were born more than 10 years after the end of the war. And this was, like, talking about Hannibal crossing the Alps to defeat Rome, you know. And it couldn't mean anything to them.

There was a moment that I will never forget. That when my son at age 10 or 12 said to me, hey, Dad, what was the name of that guy over there? I said, what? What guy over where?

He says, well, where did you Austria, or wherever you came from? We came from Germany. He said, yeah.

What's the name of that guy in the-- I says, what guy? Adenauer? He said, no, no, before that.

Hitler? Yeah, Hitler. That's right. And I thought it's incredible that in the year 1965 some bright young men had never heard the name Adolf Hitler. Not from me, either. Apparently I was deficient in telling them about it. But they didn't understand and they didn't care.

My wife, I was together with her for 12 years. I guess she knew all that. And we talked about that fairly frequently. She wasn't terribly impressed with my exploits. And she was more impressed with the fact that we had a nice new practice and a couple lovely kids and lived in a wonderful part of the world, finally.

And 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. And let's forget about all that and enjoy the fruits of liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness.

It's interesting. I didn't talk much about that, not with my mother, either. To me, it didn't mean too much, either. It's typical for old people to suddenly go back and try to retrace your steps.

The reason why all this came up, including writing my memoirs, was really that for the first time in my life, I wasn't rushed by everyday activity. And the job of an obstetrician is not all that easy, getting up in the middle of the night, and having a family, and a garden, and I learned to cook, and we traveled. And I am a musician. I've played a lot of music.

And there wasn't any time to do very much else and think about the past. So I guess I didn't really focus on these things until the kids were gone, and the wife was gone, and my job was gone, and I had time to think and consider what has happened.

Where did you meet your wife? Where did you meet your wife?

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. But I realized after a few months of off and on 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.

And 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. And she was just shocked.

And the next thing I know, a year later, she more or less showed up at my doorstep in Chicago. And somehow, we got married because the old chemistry flared up again. Of course, obviously, I was lonely in Chicago.

I didn't know many people, or any people at all hardly. And she was a piece of home that, suddenly, 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 where my kids started school when they were little babies which, strangely enough, is about eight minutes to walk from my present home. It's very strange-- in Castro Valley.

It's still good coffee.

What was the most difficult part of your experience?

Well, the most difficult part was really to grow up in a high class society and suddenly, practically overnight, being told that I was trash and I didn't fit into either 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 that the kid only looks white but actually he is a mixed blood Negro. And how that kid would feel when somebody confronts him with it, his buddies in school say you're a n***** or something like that.

And that's the way, about how I felt. And that was probably the worst part of it, the loss of self-respect. Everything else was, more or less, I was happy to survive, isn't that most difficult part.

Interesting question, because I didn't think anything was all that catastrophic. But that's hindsight. In a way, this episode of the Nazi commandant in Halle, catching me at my grandmother's house into two or three nights without sleep, that's probably the closest I came to despair.

And 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, by a bunch of Germans in that camp. And possibly, that was one of my worst experiences. But that seems to be part of prisoners anywhere.

What had happened when--

What happened?

Yeah.

Well, this has really very little to do with the Holocaust. And I'd just as soon not get this on the tape here. If somebody wants to know about it, they can read my book.

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

When my kids were getting ready to fly the coop, I told them, look, I'm 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'll support you in college.

But 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-- in Germany. And my daughter wanted to go to Israel and live in a kibbutz. And this and that came up.

And I told them I will support you for an extra year just 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 straightjacket of a job. And that's what they did.

My daughter went to Kenya for a year, was studying the behavior of a Black matriarchal society outside of Mombasa and lived with them for a year and learned to speak Swahili. And she's still trying to write a book about it.

And my son went to Germany and worked in a place of his uncle. And well, then he wanted to go into that, into this, and he wanted to be an environmentalist. And then he wanted to produce beer. And he wanted to do this and 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. And in this country with his grades, he couldn't have gotten into UC the first crack.

Because he was spoiled in high school, where he and my daughter both were by far the brightest kids in Hayward. And they never did any homework, and they always came back with top grades. And 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. Then later on I found out that at the end of World War II, the Allied education authorities decided that Germans-- it had been the habit of German universities to have the old folks 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 ever got into medical school.

And the Allied forces said, look, you've got to take people into the medical school according to their intellectual ability and their potential of becoming doctors regardless of how much money their parents have. And in addition to that, you have to start taking 3% non-Germans into medical schools, unheard of in Germany. They never had a Japanese or a Romanian in the German medical school for centuries.

So Cliff suddenly got in there because he was a non-German. He was an American. And he didn't know that at first, either.

And I didn't, either. And I never really discussed it with him. I think he knows that now.

But maybe he would have passed, anyhow. But if I listen to his German now, I'm surprised that he ever passed all the

boards. But he did very well. And what was the question I'm banging around with?

I was just asking how that's made you feel, just having him live in Germany.

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, a new job, medical school, a new wife or girlfriend, and a whole new set of circumstances. And it's amazing to look at that. And we both did well adjusting to the new situation.

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

And besides that, there's another factor that is very delightful. Namely, medical school is for free in Germany except for your textbook and room and board. But you pay no student fees at all. So he probably saved me $120,000 by not going to Stanford or someplace. So I'm grateful for that.

And he has enough money and I have enough money that we can get together. I've been seeing him at least once a year all these years. And he comes over here on business trips. And he is a bilingual medical editor of one of the two top medical publishers in Germany, Georg Thieme, T-H-I-E-M-E.

And we both talk about that a great deal, about our bilingual speaking talents. We have been sitting together and chatting at full speed. And people were just astonished when we talked to each other, the way we talked.

And we never knew whether we were speaking in English and German at the time. And we would sometimes start talking a sentence in English. And then a German word comes in, [GERMAN], supermarket into the picture. And suddenly, we speak English again for another two minutes. And people sit around there and they laugh because of that.

But what did I say funny? You know, I didn't even know I was speaking German. And that in itself is a good thing. You could make money with it as a bilingual interpreter at the United Nations or something.

So at any rate, he would rather live in California. But his wife is a potter in Munich. And she doesn't want to live here. It's too much pottery in Berkeley, anyway. No children, because they don't want to put kids into this miserable world.

My daughter doesn't want to have any kids, either. So I guess we don't have any grandchildren. I have to borrow some from my friends every once in a while.

Looking back to the war, is there anything that, when you look back, that you fell or felt ashamed of at the time?

Well, I showed you the picture of the brother's shul earlier. And 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. And before the opera started, suddenly, the orchestra played the national anthem. And everybody got up and turned around because Adolph Hitler was up there in the Emperor's Lodge. And everybody stood up there and greeted the great fuhrer of the German Reich.

And just shortly before the opera was over, or symphony concert, I forgot what it was, 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 Adolf Hitler with two or three other people coming. And Goebbels and an adjutant coming right at us, as far away as he is from me.

And I'm one of the few people I know who has really seen this man close by. And he was very impressive and a powerful personality, tremendous charisma. And of course, we both stood there and saluted him, you know.

And I described that in my book. And 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.

And 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 right in the concentration camp. And that would have been the end of me.

I'm a coward. And in this kind of a political, pressurized country, you have only a choice of either running along with the crowd, trying to hide a little bit, or to be a rebel. And if you're a rebel, you get hanged like the sisters, brothers, siblings [INAUDIBLE]. So if you ask me what I'm not proud of, it's that I went along with it.

But as you know, there were 50 million other Germans running along, too. There's no way that you can convince me that there were 50 million Nazis in Germany. Most of these people weren't. And if they had had the courage that they should have had, Hitler would have never gotten even as far as the beginning of the war.

But that's the power of persuasion and of fear and whatever. I'm not proud of that. But so what.

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

No, there are a couple of more stories attached to these photos, I guess as I would come out. And that would probably cover just about everything I can possibly say. It might be, after I've listened to both of my tapes one of these days.

I'm tired to listen to this person on a video. I just hated every minute of it. But I guess I should, and make myself some notes. And I might realize that there's something, an amendment that I might have to put in later.

Can you add it to a video if I made some serious mistakes and want to correct it or add it or so? Or is that important?

You can definitely come back and talk to us again.

Yeah.

Yeah.

OK.

That's what I'm going to do, yeah. I'll let you know when you stop [INAUDIBLE]. Go ahead.

Well, this is a picture of my mother, my Jewish mother, sitting with her new baby, a new baby on the right is myself, about a few months old. And my brother, my older brother, Ulrich, is on the left.

Where are you? Where was this taken?

I don't know, probably on the balcony in our summer house in Germany. OK? Just point to me when I'm on.

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

That's about it. That is a picture of my father, with a one-year-old son, me, in Leipzig. That's the town where I was born and grew up. My father was a professor of philosophy in there. And it'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.

And Grandfather Landsberg, a judge in Naumburg, is sitting there in the grandfather chair in his study, and grandmother 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's my Uncle Conrad, who was in his mid-thirties at the time, also an attorney who ran away to Holland and lived underground in Holland and had a very colorful history, most of which is not known to me.

And 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 anything.

This is a somewhat earlier picture of my grandmother with her grandson, my brother, in 1938 when he was 20. And the other picture in here is 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 a house in Naumburg, Germany, where my grandparents lived from 1919 to 1941. And the house was sold under pressure, with all the receipts from the house taken away by the Nazi government. So nothing was left of it, a wonderful house.

The bottom was a chauffeur's apartment with a couple of paralegal offices, secretaries. The next floor was rented out to some old friends. The next floor, which in Germany was called the second floor, is the main living quarters of the family. And the two windows at the top were the guest rooms, where little people like my brother and I would usually sleep and hear the thumping of the opera bass recording underneath while we tried to go to sleep.

Yes. My wealthy grandparents were rather well-known in town, in a town of 30,000 people, for having one of three supercars, this one an old Mercedes from 1922. And you see the chauffeur sitting at the wheel and 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. And these are my children. The boy in the middle, Cliff, born in 1955 and girl in front, Jean, born in 1957. So this picture was taken in 1963, I believe, in our backyard in Castro Valley.

A picture of myself, I'm a little embarrassed about it because everybody thinks I'm a little girl. But it was typical for mamas in the mid-'20s in Germany to dress up even their little boys like they were cute little semi-females, somewhat androgynous. And still a pretty good picture, including that strange straight cut over the forehead, playing with a train there in my grandfather's house.

A few years later that's myself again in the uniform with a couple of 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, there's a picture of my older brother, Ulrich, in 1936, when he was 18, with the two family dogs, a huge, big St. Leonard or Leonard dog, which was a mixture of a Newfoundland and a St. Bernard and this little guy, Dachshund, Dachshund, they say in this country. 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 referred as a student of physics. And eventually, in 1940, joined the military and was killed in May, 1940, when the Nazi armies marched into Belgium.

This is the site of the Kristallnacht disaster that I described in my book at first, at the 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.

And 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 had been founded in 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, a Bamberger and Hertz. It was set to fire in the Kristallnacht, but was rebuilt much later. And the story of the Kristallnacht place takes place on this square in this very area. That's why I took this picture. I've recently talked to Mr. Bamberger, who has gotten possession of this building again and is a prominent citizen of Leipzig, Augustusplatz.

This is our high school graduation picture in 1938 of a high class, humanistic, so-called high school in Leipzig. And 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. And 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, well, if you weren't, there are only three possibilities. Either you were in the Hitler Youth, or you were killed as a Jew, or you were a Nazi collaborator.

I said I certainly wasn't a Nazi collaborator. And as far as being killed, why would you give me a visa if I were dead? And he said, huh? And I said, I can prove to you that I was not in the Hitler Youth.

He said everybody was in the Hitler Youth. I said, no, I wasn't. So I called my stepmother in Berlin and says, isn't there a picture around when we graduated in 1938?

And she found this picture. And there are 20 guys on this picture. And our class teacher, a Mr. Buchs. And there are three girls in there.

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

And you'll notice that two of the people are in civilian clothes. This fellow up in front, up, up on top, the fifth from the left was a Catholic character who refused-- whose parents refused to let him join the Hitler Youth.

And somehow, he survived. I talked to him a few months ago and met him last year in Germany. He was Catholic. And 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. And occasionally, spray the words "Nazi [NON-ENGLISH]," which means "to death with all Nazis."

And he was never caught. Because he would obviously have been instantly executed if somebody had caught him. And the other guy in civilian suit is on the bottom, way on the right. And that is me. And so I could prove to the idiotic consul that I was really not in any uniform. And then I got my visa, eventually.

And all of these people in the picture, 20 plus 4, there are only about 7 still alive. The story of the three girls was fascinating. And there's one fellow way up on top of the left side, my good buddy, Albrecht, whom I spent a couple of days with, way up on top, there, he spent-- there.

When I showed him the picture, he said to me, you know why I stand sideways? So that you can't see the swastika on my left arm. Because I wasn't a Nazi. I'd be damned if I'd be seen with a swastika.

And he returned from-- he was a soldier in the army of-- what's his name, the German field commander Rommel in Africa. He was a big shot officer in Africa and was captured there at El Alamein, or one of these places, and was sent to America as a prisoner of war. And he was in the officer's prisoner of war camp in Texas.

And 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. And he got a good suntan, because they spent most of their time lying around in the sun. And he was getting fat because food was good.

And eventually, he was exchanged, shortly after the end of the war. It so happened I was in Leipzig at the time. And some little guy came with a bicycle to my house. And says, hey, Dieter, Albrecht has just got into town yesterday. And he said for you to come over.

So I went over to Albrecht's some evening. And we sat together and talked all evening. Had a couple of bottles of wine. And it was a wonderful reunion.

I've known this guy till 1930, which is now 66 years. And so we would have a wonderful new life. And then I went home with my bike. And next morning, the little guy came over again and says, please come quick. Something terrible happened.

The communist military authorities marched into Albrecht's house at 5:00 in the morning and arrested him. Because the communists presumed that all officers, all German officers by definition are party members, Nazis. And they arrested him and sent him to Siberia. And so he was gone for three or four years.

And when I got to his house-- his father had been a Social Democratic editor who had died-- I think who had died in a concentration camp. And when his mother heard-- and one of his brothers was killed in the war, and his second brother had died of tuberculosis, or was still alive at that point.

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

And everybody was dead except the fiancee of one of his brothers in Mannheim, Germany, who took him in and nursed him back to moderate spiritual, psychological health. He had been the best student in the class. And 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.

And eventually, he made a pretty good income in that factory, as he was an accountant of, in Mannheim. And now he's back to normal at his age. And we are good buddies again.

That was one of the more harassing stories. If you have 6, 7, 8, or 9 hours, I can tell you another 6 or 7 stories of these people in this picture. As a matter of fact, I have to start writing those stories down in another book. And with that, I will sign off. Thank you very much.

Thank you.