

--the date and the people, and--

Is this the 25 or--

Fourth.

Fourth.

24?

Yeah. Any time we're OK.

OK. I'm Constance Bernstein, and I'm talking with Walter Frank. It is July 24, and we're at the Holocaust center in San Francisco. And this is my third interview with Walter, delightful.

I think, Walter, that we have covered most of the events of your very rich life in terms of the experiences--

Interesting life, not rich, but interesting.

Well, I mean rich in experiences. And you're so remarkable because you remember so much. I want to ask you now about some personal repercussions or personal-- the results of all these rich experiences, how it's affected you. But first of all, let's talk about some of the people you know. I know that you were very actively involved with many of the-- with the Jewish community in the East Bay and with many people who are survivors or who come from-- who were with you in Shanghai.

And let me ask you, how do you think that the experience, that kind of experience of being a survivor, has affected some of your friends that you know?

Well, it's pretty hard to tell how my experiences affected my friends--

No, how their--

--how experiences affect them. I know it affected different people in different ways. Some people just can't talk about it. If they do talk about it, they made a point of talking about it once. As a matter of fact, in connection with this project that you're running here, I asked one of my friends here in San Francisco, a woman who's a little younger than I am, whether she'd be willing to be an interviewee for the program.

And she told me that she'd been interviewed with some difficulties by the city of Berlin, by a part of the city of Berlin, and they invited her and other ex-Berliners back to the city. And she just couldn't see how she could do it again. Some people can't talk about it at all.

I've been able to talk about it. In fact, I was asked at the University of California when I talked to a group of students there a number of years ago in a Berkeley Project where, I guess, there were four or five of us invited to talk to them whether I'd mind talking about it. And I said, no, I don't mind talking about it at all. Somebody's got to witness. I think somebody has got to be there and say, yes, I was there. This is what happened. And there are lots of others that do that.

Why I can do it without some other kids breaking down about it, or choking up on it, or whatever I don't really know. It would probably take a psychiatrist to really figure it out. What I can visualize is that somewhere along the line-- and this could have started in Buchenwald-- I just built a shell around all these feelings to contain them and to protect myself against them.

And this is why I can sit here and reasonably, coolly and, quite often, with some humor talk about all this. Another aspect is, of course, that, as you sit here comfortably among friends in a nice part of the United States, having had a

reasonably good lunch-- you can talk about these things. You can remember them.

And you remember, usually, better the nice parts than the bad parts. What is much more difficult to recall, and talk about, and put into words is the terror, the fear, the hopelessness that you're actually experiencing when you're in a situation such as being in a concentration camp. Being in a death-- in a death camp it is even worse because at the time that I was in Buchenwald it was not really a death camp. It was a camp in which death came not only unsolicited but it came at random.

Some SS men might take into his head to fire a shot at you. I know people were-- the SS guards outside the camp would say, come over here, and the man went over there. Give me your hat, and he'd give them the hat. And they threw the hat outside and say, go pick it up. And then the prisoner, stupidly enough, would go and pick it up.

And of course, walking past a sentry was equivalent to escaping. The sentry turned round and killed him, and the official report was "trying to escape." But that was random. It wasn't the killing by the numbers that started after Eichmann and the meeting in Wannsee, I guess it was, where they discussed the Final Solution.

But when you're in the camp, you don't know when you'll get out, whether you'll get out, what shape you'll be in if you get out, and when you get out. You don't know that you're going to live, when you wake up in the morning, that you live out the day, or that you may be tortured that day one way or the other. You don't know any of these things.

And you don't know what is going on outside. Is anybody working to get you out of there? Is your family all right? Are they still around? And on a larger scale, you don't know what the world is doing about all this. Is America intervening with the German government, protesting about this treatment of people, Jews and others? Does the world care? You don't know.

And there is very often that feeling of either hopelessness or just about to lose hope. Why should you worry? Why should you carry on? Why should you try to survive another day, another hour?

And so you keep going anyway. Some people didn't. Some people walked into the electric fences and killed themselves or, on the way to the electric fence, were shot by guards because they were passing through prohibited territory. But that's very difficult to recall, very difficult to recall.

I saw an article in the Moment magazine-- it just came out the other day-- a first-person-singular account, "I captured Eichmann." And he reports that after Eichmann was put on a plane from Argentina to Israel, after the plane was airborne the flight crew was notified whom they had on board there.

And there was one crew chief who broke down. He just went into a corner and broke down because he remembered at that point how, in the camp-- and he'd been in the camp-- the SS tore his six-year-old brother from his hand and killed the little boy. And he had to control himself not to turn around and kill Eichmann.

As I say, I sit here, and I'm fairly cool about it. And I probably will remain that way, and I'll talk about it. And I will be talking about it to anybody who is interested in it, who wants to listen. And I wish I had more words, better words, had a bigger vocabulary to express all the things and remember the things, the bad things.

You do remember the nice things. You remember the sunny days. It's very hard to remember the rain, and the mud, and the muck, the cold, freezing cold, and you're wearing nothing but a thin cotton uniform, practically no underwear, no gloves, shoes that are torn. It's very difficult to remember that.

And of course, unfortunately, no one could make a on-the-spot report about it. A while back, a series of photographs was discovered. These were theirs-- color slides, which were a rarity during the war because color photography was fairly backward in those days, fairly expensive process.

And they were taken by an SS official in Lodz, the Ghetto of Lodz, who was quite officially taking pictures. In fact, he took pictures of the camp commandant, city mayor, all those very proud and well-fed officials. And he also took

pictures, of course, of the Jews, and they are now an exhibit in Frankfurt, the Jewish Museum.

I'm going to try to see if he can get a copy of that exhibit. I'll have to see how expensive it is to translate that all to English because it's in German. But it might be an interesting exhibit for this area here.

Another thing, I just had a letter from a photographer in Wiesbaden, to whom I wrote months ago. What happened there is that during the deportation of the last 480 Jews in August of 1942, 80 of whom committed suicide on one day, 80, mostly old people, a security service policeman took photographs secretly of what was going on there.

And those photographs were found after the war. I think when he died, his widow turned them over to that photographer that I wrote to, and when I was over there a year ago, I asked him whether I could get copies of these pictures. And at that time, there was a copyright hold on those pictures. They were writing a book, publishing in the book.

He just wrote me that the pictures the photographs are available at 9 marks a copy, which is, I guess, around \$6 a copy. So I'll have to see how many of them there are and see whether it's financially feasible to buy them. But what I want to get eventually is a book that they're going to publish because, again, that's documentation. This is what happened.

And the reason why I'm doing it-- well, another 10, 20 years, 30 years, none of the people that went through all that will be around. If they're around, they probably won't remember much about it. And this has got to be part of our history. The next generation, the generation after that-- it's got to remember it.

Every year we celebrate Pesach. We have Passover Seders. We remember the exodus from Egypt. That's got to be remembered, a minimum of 2,000 years. And so we got to talk about it, and write about it, and increase the size of libraries such as the one you have out here. That's why I'm doing it.

When you were in the camp, did you-- when you talk about a shell being-- you formed a shell around you, were you aware of that happening?

No, no, you're not consciously aware that. It's not like building a radio, or fixing a watch, or building a house. I suppose your unconscious or your subconscious does that. And again, I'm guessing at it. I'm an accountant. I'm not a psychiatrist. I'm just guessing at it.

And again, I'm talking to the layman about something I shouldn't be talking about. It's a defense mechanism. You've got to survive, and the only way to survive is to say, well, maybe it isn't happening. Maybe it isn't going to be so bad. Maybe you're going to get out, maybe. And you cast aside whatever fears there are. You try to. You try to get around it, and then you do, not always, but sometimes you do.

And when did you notice that it was there, this shell?

I don't think I noticed that it was there. I'm guessing that it's there. I'm just guessing I don't know that it is there. I don't know whether that is the explanation. And I'd probably have to spend a year or so in analysis to see whether there is a shell or not or whether I'm just dreaming, and I'm not going to spend that kind of money. It's \$90 an hour even if I get a fairly inexpensive psychiatrist, and I got other uses for my money.

Have you ever felt that you needed to talk to somebody--

No.

--a therapist, a doctor?

No, no, I hadn't. I never felt that there was a point where I couldn't go on, where the only way out was to get somebody to try to explain it to me. I had given some thought to that because several times I've been asked, how come you can talk about it? And why can you talk about it? And all this thing, and don't you mind, all this thing.

Why is it that I can talk about it and some others cannot? But then I'm not the only one. You've got 700 or so people on your roster here that are talking into the camera and into the tape. I remember seeing Eddie Weinschenke, who is-- if you haven't got him on the tape, you should. He's a Dutch Jew, lives down the Peninsula, and he's very active in talking about his experience. He goes to schools and all that, and he talks about it very fluently and very eloquently.

And I'm sure he's gone through the same sort of psychological-- call it toughening-up that I've gone through without realizing it, without knowing about it.

What about your brother? Did you notice with your brother any--

He wasn't in the camp, so he was more on the outside. But he was-- when he was born and when we were young together, he was the kind of guy that wouldn't shut up. He was a talker. He had something to say about everything.

And I remember one time when he might have been three or four years old my father said, if you can sit on this chair-- or I think it was the kitchen range. It was cold range. If you can sit on the kitchen range for 15 minutes without saying anything, I'll give you 5 marks. And he sat in the kitchen range for 15 minutes, and he got his 5 marks. But he made up for it afterwards.

He stopped talking. He doesn't-- he became very quiet, and he was quiet and didn't say very much. He kind of internalized it.

Did he get quiet in Shanghai, from that experience?

Yeah, well, I saw him again, of course, after I came home, and this was just a few days before we went to Shanghai. And while he wasn't the withdrawn type of person-- but he had changed.

He had changed already.

He had changed. He had changed. Here he was still with it, and we played ping pong on board ship. But he was noticeably different more-- call it more mature if you will. And he stayed that way, and he died just about 20 years ago, 48 years old, some kind of a brain thing. I'm not sure what it was. I never found out quite what he died off.

He was a dispatcher for Pan American Airways. He was the International President of the International Airline Dispatchers Association which involved his traveling all over the world, and inspecting airfields, and checking out facilities. And so he was a very good professional man within the field of dispatching aircraft and operations activity.

But he was quieter. But maybe he would have been quieter anyway as he grew up. Kids do one thing, and adults do something else.

So how do you think you changed?

I? I don't know. One of the things that changed is that, having survived so many opportunities, not just Buchenwald but others, of cashing in my chips, I don't get too excited anymore about stuff. The question when I get excited is I ask myself, is this worth dying for? And if it isn't, then I don't get excited, which may have something to do with keeping my blood pressure under control.

I had a chance-- many chances of dying, of course, in the camp and afterwards in Shanghai. It was a very unhealthy place to be, and I was quite sick a couple of times with specific illnesses. Then after the war, when I worked for the Air Force, I was in a very bad Jeep accident and given 24 hours at the most, and I survived that.

So I can't get too excited I'm living on borrowed time. I have been living on borrowed time for quite a while. I just celebrated my 70th, and I'm still around. And I can't get too excited, and that may be one of the philosophical results of all these experiences.

So you measure everything against, is this dying for?

In a way, in a way, yeah. Is this really worth dying for? If it isn't, then I don't get excited. There are very few things that are worth dying for.

So you don't get worried, you mean?

No. Like I'm coming here on the bus, getting number 31 Balboa bus, and I think we spent 15 minutes just going through Market Street. On one traffic light we watched it change seven times. That street was just blocked. I don't know what was going on there.

Well, normally I say, God, why doesn't that bus move? I've got to get out of there. I've got to be there at 2:30 and so forth. But I had plenty of time anyway, so I didn't get excited. But even if I hadn't had any time, so I'm going to be late. So what? As it is, I was early.

Nobody's going to kill you for being late, right?

No, no, no. This is one thing I-- that's a habit I picked up, I guess, in Germany. When somebody says, be there at 6:00, I'm there at 6:00, not at five after 6:00. It frustrates my wife. We get invited for dinner, and dinner's at 7:30. So I try to be there at 7:30, and my wife says, oh, you get there late, it's fine, plenty of time.

But I had some early life experiences. I remember one time, going to school, I've been ill. I've been out with a cold for four or five days. I went back to school. I show up in school, and nobody there. Where's everybody? Well, there's a field trip.

Oh my God. I'm missing out on a field trip, and there's a lot of fun. Where'd the field trip go? Such and such a place. I said, tell somebody-- I found a kid that's going over there. Tell them to wait for me. I run home to quick, quick, pack me a sandwich. I got to go out on the field-- no, you can't go out on field. You just got out of bed with a cold.

Well, the next day I got hell in school. Why didn't you show up? We waited for you, and so forth. Well, my mother didn't let me go. And it's kind of stayed in my mind till the day, and so I kind of hate-- when I promise something, I want to be--

They expected you to be there.

They expect me to be there, and the teacher gave me a big to-do. We waited a half hour for you. I said, well, I would have been there, but my parents wouldn't let me go, the kind of excuse that Calvin uses in his experiences if you read the Calvin comic strip.

Oh, no.

You don't? Well, you're missing something. I still read the comic strip, buy the books, and catch it up to date [INAUDIBLE] it's in the San Francisco Chronicle. That's not a commercial for the Chronicle, however. At least buy-- if anybody sees this in the future.

That I can understand. If I ask your wife, also, what she thought the experience of being in the camp and being in Shanghai as a survivor, how she thought that affected you, what would she tell me?

Gosh, I don't know. I don't know. She probably thinks I'm a little bit too German in my-- and not necessarily survivor German but just generally German-- my approach to being on time, for example, which, as I understand it, is very un-American. You see, when you're invited, you're supposed to be 15 to 20 minutes late. Well, I just kind of hate to be late. You say 6:00, you mean 6:00.

One time I had a speaking engagement in Salt Lake City at 6:00. I was supposed to meet an attorney at 6:00 in his

office, and we were going over to where I was going to give my lecture. And I had figured it out. I left here, and drove to the airport, and took the plane, and got on a bus in Salt Lake City, and I walked into his office at 6:00 sharp, all this distance with all the possible delays. But I was there on time. It's the kind of thing I like to do. I haven't been able to do it all the time, but I like to do it.

Well, there's something about being able to plan, isn't there, so that the outcome, which maybe has something to do with your experience of being out of control? You like to be in control and to feel that you can do something--

Maybe that's it. Maybe being in control is one of those things that's-- I wasn't in control during the Hitler period. The control was taken away from me, and I like to be in control. That includes planning ahead. When do you leave? What kind of transportation do you take? How do you get there?

If necessary, I get myself maps of the area. I check for car rental facilities if it's out of town and I can't take my car. And it's all planned ahead. We are planning to go to the University of Judaism in August for a week on an Elderhostel trip. And I've got it all pretty well-worked out so that I know when I'll get there. And unless the airplanes are late or fall down unexpectedly, we'll be there on time, and I got that under control.

So you have everything planned.

Yeah. Except for one thing-- I know that once I'm-- once I'm at the airport I'm subject to whatever delays the airlines have, and there's not a thing you can do about it. And there's no point getting frustrated and excited about it because that's the way it is in the airline business.

When I went to Germany a year ago, I was supposed to leave at 2:00 from San Francisco, and so my son took me over there, dropped me off at 1:30. And I went to the check-in counter and checked my baggage, and then I was told, the plane isn't here yet and it's going to be delayed. How long? Oh, I don't know, an hour or two.

So what? Once I'm in transit, I'm in transit. It turned out I left at 3:00 instead of the 2:00, or 3:30. That doesn't get me excited. But where I am in charge I want to be on time.

So what does excite you?

Well, lots of things, I suppose. Good food, good books, an interesting problem in the office. My grandchildren-- they excite me, four, five, and seven-- it's a handful.

Last Saturday, we had them over to our house. We were babysitting while their parents went to see *Les Miserables*, which we'd send them to as a birthday present. We had hamburgers for dinner. We had only one bun in the house. We hadn't planned that.

And I had that bun, and my four-year-old granddaughter insisted that she wanted a piece of that bun, so I gave it to her. Well, sure. Well, she took a bite out of it, and she decided, no, she doesn't want it. So her seven-year-old cousin next to her grabs it and says, I'll eat it. That's the way it goes from generation to generation. That's exciting, from generation to generation, seven years old.

So I asked her whether she knows what that means in Hebrew, and she didn't know that. But now she does. I taught her that, l'dor, v'dor, from generation to generation.

So did you send your-- did you raise your children as very--

As Jews?

Very much as Jews in Hebrew school and--

Oh, yeah, Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. They went to-- they went to a public school in Berkeley, but they went to all the

Jewish schools, and Hebrew classes, and all that stuff at Temple Beth-El, and they were bar mitzvahed, of course, naturally.

And then they married-- my youngest son married a daughter of a survivor from Germany. They live in the Peninsula. The parents live in the Peninsula. And my youngest son and his wife live in Forestville. My oldest boy announced that he was planning to get engaged to a young lady who wasn't Jewish, which caused a lot of discussion.

She converted, became Jewish, and now they're members of the Orthodox shul in Berkeley and are strictly kosher, strictly observant, to the point where I'm not that strict. And their kids go-- the daughter goes to a Jewish day school now, and their son, Will, when he gets to-- the five-year-old, when he gets to be six, will go to that school. And of course, the grandparents help out financially. So they're, if there's such a thing, more Jewish than we are.

Now, how do you explain that?

I don't know. I don't know. My grandparents on my father's side were Orthodox. That is my father's parents. Our house-- we were a member of what might be called the liberal temple in Wiesbaden. Here you might call it Conservative.

My wife's parents were Orthodox. She grew up in an Orthodox household. We have a Conservative household. We try to keep kosher, but not that strict. My son, when we have-- when he comes over for Friday night Shabbos dinner, he takes a look at the package of cookies to be sure that there's no milk in it if we had meat or milk powder or anything like that. It's not kosher. He is strictly Orthodox, and he knows more about customs and rules than I do now.

When I give a talk and I do that quite often at either the Torah study group we have at Temple Beth-El or at the prayer book study group, which was just started out, I use his library for research because he's got more stuff than I do, which is nice. It's nice, in a way. It's a step backwards-- not backwards in the sense of bad, but in a step back to-- Conservative to Orthodox Judaism. It's fine.

But it's interesting--

It's interesting.

--that he married a non-Jewish woman.

And she is-- she is more-- she watches out more than he does, as a matter of fact. She speaks Hebrew more-- she speaks more Hebrew than my wife does, and my wife grew up in Brooklyn, New York, which is the cradle of American Judaism, very, very, very-- she's right with it.

How did you feel about that initially, though?

Well, initially we were upset, marrying a non-Jewish woman. You can't do that. There's just no way. There's just no-- just no way. We've got to talk to her. If she wants to convert, fine, but if she doesn't convert, boy, it's going to be some real trouble. She converted, and she became more Jewish than we are.

So it really was-- because sometimes parents object to the non-Jewish man or woman not because they're non-Jewish so much religiously but because of the culture, or the ethics, or the family, or the blood. But for you it was a matter of the religion?

Religion. My point was we have lost six million Jews in World War II during the Holocaust. We cannot afford to lose even one. And if there is a mixed marriage, usually you lose the Jewish part, usually, not always, but usually. It kind of drifts out of the fold. And next thing the kids-- Jewish father, non-Jewish mother, the kids are nothing.

But it's not unusual that sort of thing happens. I've known a number of Jewish ladies who started out as non-Jews, became converted, and became Jewish and very much so, very much so. In one case I'm familiar with, the woman became so Jewish and so locked into the Orthodoxy that her husband couldn't take it anymore. And she moved to Israel.

He's here. She insisted that's the way she wants to be, with her folks, their kind. There is a convert.

But it's interesting because in Germany it was the time-- the last century and during the beginning of this century there was a lot of conversion or a lot of integration, and is that something you are responding to now that you see this happening in this society and you don't want it to happen? You're afraid that--

Well, in a way. I don't think I'm responding to what happened in Germany. I'm simply saying that at this point, having lost six million people, we Jews should make every effort not to lose any more. There's a lot of this assimilation going on. There's a lot of intermarriage going on, a lot more in the States and elsewhere, but particularly in the States where the largest Jewish group lives nowadays. And we've got to make every effort not to lose any more.

I know-- I'm reading a book that was published by a Leo Baeck Institute, which-- a rough translation of the title -- it's in Germany. A rough translation is, Life Experiences of German Jews from 1780 to 1945.

It's a collection of diaries, memoirs, personal recollections, first-person-singular recollections, or recollections by children of what their fathers and mothers did, all covering that period from 1780 the time of Frederick the Great to 1945, the end of World War II.

And you read that, and as you get into the 1800, 1820, '30, '40, '50 era you'll find a lot of this moving out of the faith. A lot of the people who became judges or other major officials found it was a lot easier being a judge if you were a Catholic.

And there's the old story about the Jew who wants to convert, and he becomes a Catholic. And about a year later, he converts again, becomes a Protestant. So he's asked, how come Catholic and Protestant? He says, well, it's very simple. He says, if I'm in court for something and the judge asked me what's my religion, I'll say Protestant. And he says, and what was it before? I'll say Catholic. He doesn't say Jewish. It's Catholic.

Well, it's a story that may be typical of the days and the times. There were a lot of intermarriages. There were a lot of people drifting out of the faith. But there were a lot of them that stayed right in it. Incidentally, that book has one of those memoirs which were written by a Wiesbaden resident, a former Wiesbaden resident name of Max Berger, who recalls his days in Buchenwald. He was there at the same time I was there and my father was there.

And he says that as he's stumbling around, and in this muck and mist and there's a roll call, and confusion, he comes upon a man lying on the ground semi-conscious. And there's six other Wiesbaden people standing around him to prevent people from stepping on him, and it turns out to be my father.

And so he had a bottle of mouthwash in his pocket, so he was able to wet my father's lips and let him smell the smell of the peppermint or whatever it was and revived him long enough so that they could stand him up, two people holding him, because there was a roll call, and they're supposed to stand. And my father revived some more, and then people around him were collapsing.

And so my father, as a physician with this little bottle of mouthwash which he borrowed, kind of walked around trying to help other people that collapsed until the SS came and told him to cut it out or else. I hadn't known about that incident because I'd been separated from my father almost immediately upon arrival in the camp.

And Max Berger, Hans Berger, who told that story, was my boss. I worked for him before I was arrested and before he was arrested. He wrote that story in Belgium after he was released and left Germany and sent it to somebody who wrote it up and sent it to Leo Baeck Institute, I suppose. Berger himself and his family disappeared in France, no trace, probably captured by the Germans.

His brother is in the States, or at least he was-- I don't know whether he's still alive-- somewhere in Southern California, Tulare, something like that.

Did you tell us about your father in the-- did he come home earlier than you?

Yes. He was in the camp for two weeks and was released. During those two weeks, I saw him once, and he looked terrible. He apparently had some kind of a breakdown, and maybe that first day or second day when Berger ran across him and he was in what was called The Revier. Revier was sort of a first aid station.

And he may have been released for any number of reasons. One is the breakdown he had. The others-- that he had the Iron Cross from the First World War. He was a medical officer in the German army, captain. That may have been what got him out, but he was released after two weeks. He went home, and then he and my mother got busy getting our immigration together, and I told you about that. And I was there five months.

Now, you know they have groups for children of survivors to come together and to talk about their experiences. Can you understand that some of them might need to talk to each other?

I know they do. I don't exactly know why because again we get into psychiatry and what moves their minds. We had been involved with one of those groups many years ago when we had some minor problems with our kids, and we thought that maybe this was one of the reasons, that they were kids of survivors. But it turned out it had nothing to do with it, and it was a short-lived sort of a problem which was solved rather quickly.

But I had read books about it, and I understand that, in some cases, the children pick up-- call it the vibes of their parents, tension, nervousness, unhappiness, nightmares, whatever. In that case, if that happens, the children of survivors need help. And I can understand it. I have no personal experience with it, though.

Sometimes they can carry the pain for their parents.

Yeah, it could be that some cases, people who went through what I did or went through a lot worse-- because I can't, by any means, say that I went through the things that people did that went through Auschwitz or that went all the way to 1945 and managed to survive by a hair-- that they maybe have much shorter fuses. They get excited more easily. They fly off the handle more easily.

And that, of course, reflects on the children, more nerves, more tense. In that case, the children need counseling or whatever other psychiatric help is necessary.

If I were to ask your children how they felt being the children of a survivor, do you think they would--

I don't know what they would say. I really don't know. I don't know that they would respond one way or another. I can't speak for them. I just don't know, with the exception at one point where we thought there might be some problem, but it turns out there wasn't.

I haven't seen any evidence that they would be affected or infected in any way. My younger son studied psychology and became a-- he has a master's degree in psychology and has been practicing, hasn't practiced recently, has been practicing in that field for some time. And he'd probably know more about it than I do.

Yes, it would be interesting to hear his whole situation.

I don't know how he would respond.

Then he went into psychiatry?

Well, more psychology. For psychiatry you need an MD.

And what did your other children do? What did they become?

Well, the two boys-- one became a psychologist and stopped his-- didn't continue on for a PhD, became married. His wife was a potter. She studied pottery at UC Santa Cruz, where my son went. That's where they met.

And so she started a business, and he went in with her. And he does all the chemistry, and he does all the bookkeeping. And he goes out to the shows and sells it. They're so busy with that he has no time to practice his profession.

So she's a potter?

He's a potter in a way. He does--

And they do well?

They do reasonably well. They'll never be rich with that little two-car garage workshop type of thing. In pottery, you don't get much money unless you can hire 100 people to do the work that you do or that you design and then they turn it out en masse. They do almost everything themselves. They have one or, at the most, two employees. But they make a respectable living.

And the other one became a registered nurse. He started out--

This is the Orthodox one?

That's the older one, yeah. He started out with a degree in political science, and when he graduated from UC Berkeley the only job in that field that he was really interested in had already been taken. Fellow name of Kissinger had it. He wanted to be Secretary of State.

And since the job was taken, he decided to do something else, so he got a job in a restaurant as a busboy and a salad man. And then he took some courses from the Red Cross in first aid, and that was interesting. Then he switched to get a job with Acme Western Ambulance Company in Oakland, which is one of the outfits that runs ambulances and emergency calls.

And so he worked in that field for about a year or two, driving the ambulance and helping people. And then he decided to study nursing and went to Merritt Hospital School of Nursing, which is one of the oldest in the area and put himself through school running the ambulance job, became an RN, and then went to work at Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz in the emergency room because you liked that adrenaline-charged atmosphere, quick, quick, quick, quick, quick, there's somebody bleeding to death. You've got to do something about it, code blue. A person-- the heart has stopped and breathing stopped. What do you do? It's one, two, three stuff.

And then he went to Stanford at the expense of the hospital, and studied further, and became what's called a mobile intensive care nurse. That's a nurse that's at the radio, at the hospital, and then the people in the field, the paramedics, radio in, say, we have a man, age 56, and his heart is slow, and his pulse is such, on a respirator. What do we do?

The nurse gives them instructions, whether you give him an IV with ringers and transfer it immediately or whether you bandage him up, or you do this, or you do that. He studied for that. And then after a while that got to him. It's a highly charged atmosphere, a lot of pressure, a lot of tension.

A lot of stress.

So he left that job, moved into the Bay Area, and got a job at Children's Hospital in Oakland, and worked there for a number of years, working in pediatric nursing. And now he works for a registry primarily at Kaiser Hospital in San Francisco in the pediatric unit because he likes working with kids. That's his big thing. And he's good with them. That's what he does.

And his wife is a nurse, and she's not working now because she just doesn't want to be in that field anymore, but she was in obstetrics. So they were on both ends of the scale. She was bringing people into the world, and he was working on the other side, with people coming in that were just about ready to die. He wanted to have cards printed, "William Frank, RN. If you're at death's door, call me. I'll pull you through."

He's a character. He has a sense of humor. He wrote a-- there was a contest for a number of years as to who can write the best Hemingway parody.

In the Bay Guardian.

Well, it's not the Bay Guardian. It was the-- oh, what's that restaurant called on Van Ness and McAllister? It's a restaurant which is in Venice, Italy, and that's where Hemingway used to hang out, Harry's Bar and Grill, Harry's Bar and Grill. And they sponsored it every year, and he ended it. He was one of the 25 finalists.

Oh, was he?

Didn't quite make the final cut, but they published a book, and he's in that book, a story that he wrote. It was a typical Hemingway story. And I think I mentioned that I had written up my memories from day one, May 26, 1920, to the day that I left Shanghai. But I had them on an old system, on an Apple III using VisiCalc, and I needed them translated.

And I turned this over to Convert. Somebody here mentioned Convert. They couldn't quite cut it. They were able to get it to some point, but they couldn't do it all the way, so they gave me back my disk and whatever they had. And I turned it over to Will, and he turned it all the way around.

Oh, really?

And now I've got it on my machine, and I can massage it. And he found out that I'd written the introduction as the last chapter, which-- you write an introduction after you got the book together, not first. That was my last file.

So he sent me a note along with the disks that he had converted successfully, and he says, next time you write a book, start at the beginning and then write it to the end. He said, it makes a lot more sense that way. Trust me on this. Which could be signed "Chutzpah." You know what that is?

I know what that means, yeah, one of the words--

You know the definition of Chutzpah? It's the child that killed his father and mother and throws himself on the mercy of the court because he's an orphan. There are other definitions, but not for the tape.

Tell me-- I'm going to ask you a kind of political question now. But it's a personal question, too. About the Holocaust Museum, how would you-- do you have any feelings about how you want to see the Holocaust remembered in terms of a museum? Because I understand there's a lot of debate about just what it should be.

Are you talking about the big one that's planned for Washington, DC?

Yes, that one as well. Any ideas you have about how you would like this experience remembered?

There are so many ways in which you can put a museum together. I'm involved in a museum. As you know, I'm involved with the Magnes Museum in Berkeley. I'm the Chief Financial Officer. It used to be called treasurer. Under the new legislation, it's called Chief Financial Officer. It doesn't mean more money, either in salary or for the museum, but that's what I'm doing.

There's so many ways in which you can emphasize what you want to show about the Holocaust, and I've seen a number of those museums. I've seen, of course, the Holocaust room at the Magnes Museum, which is a very, very miniature sort of thing.

I've seen Holocaust museums in Israel. That is the, of course, Yad Vashem, which is probably the best known. There's one in one of the kibbutzim that is very well-done.

So I don't have any preconceived ideas about how to do it. If I were to ask-- if I were asked to design one, I'd probably sit down, and give it a lot of thought, and maybe design and lay out what I would emphasize on it. But I have no opinions on it right now one way or the other.

But there are so many different ways in which you can do it. The main thing is you don't get kitschy about it.

What do you mean by that?

Well, you know what kitsch is? It's a German word. Kitsch was-- nationaler Kitsch, national kitsch, for example, were ashtrays with a swastika in the center. That was-- and they sold this type of stuff during Hitler period. Everything had a swastika on it. They made an ashtray, put a swastika in the middle. So you flick your ashes on the swastika.

And of course, that's desecrating the flag, not exactly burning it, but it's desecrating the flag, German flag. From my point of view, do it 20 times, but that was considered nationaler Kitsch, sort of schmaltzy, poorly done. That's what I wouldn't want to see. But I just don't have an idea right now. I haven't given any thought to it.

I think some of the differences of opinion had to do with, do you want to remember the Jews-- the Holocaust survivors should be just Jews?

That's one of the big issues. Should it be just the Jews, or should it be other, estimated, five million non-Jews, Gypsies, and homosexuals, and whatever else that Hitler considered to be less than worthwhile citizens or Untermenschen, you know, subhumans? The mental defectives, the handicapped people-- handicapped-- they can't even run. You just have to feed them. Kill them. Should that be remembered?

And that's a big debate. It seems to me that the Holocaust should remember-- if you ask that question, the Holocaust should remember all the people that were killed, not merely the Jews. If you put out-- if you put up a Jewish Holocaust museum, of course, the emphasis should be in the Jews. But the museum and the public should not close its eyes to the fact that others were killed.

I said, I, think on the tape first time around that when I came to Buchenwald, when we, November Jews, came to Buchenwald, almost 10,000 of us, there were already 12,000 prisoners in the camp, regular prisoners, people that had been there for a while ever since the camp had opened since 19-- the summer of 1937. That's about a year and a half later.

Of those 12,000 prisoners, 10,000 were not Jewish. 2,000 were. 10,000 were Catholics, people who refused to work, homosexuals, criminals. The custom in Germany was that, if you had committed a crime, you served your sentence imposed by the court-- two years, three years, one year, six months-- and you walked out to the jail a free man. And there was a Gestapo, picked you up and threw you into a camp, indefinite period of time.

And there you rotted. And so 10,000 of those people in Buchenwald, part of the regular camp of 12,000, were not Jewish. Now, they weren't gassed. They weren't burned. They weren't poisoned the way we were, and particularly, as the war went on, I think a lot of them were released and transferred into, possibly, punishment battalions on the front someplace. But they suffered.

The Gypsies were wiped out, and that should not be overlooked. It should not be parochial. It should not be a narrow view. And I know there's a lot of debate about that.

I've said it before and I've had some people complain about it. And they said, we shouldn't worry about the others. We should worry about our six million, et cetera. Yeah, that's true. Six million died, and percentagewise is a lot more than the others.

Outside of that, any organization of the size of Holocaust Museum in Washington-- it's bound to be political in some ways, even with its internal organizational politics or whatever it is. And I hate to get involved in that.

Well, have you seen the sculpture by the Palace of--

Yes.

I think it's the Legion of Honor.

Legion of Honor, the one where they had the brass railing stolen the other day.

Oh, really?

You didn't know that?

No.

It was in the papers. The caretaker came in the morning. He comes here, I think, once a week or so, maybe even every day, and washes off the figures, hoses off the dirt, dust, and whatever. And they check, and he found that the brass railings around it had been removed. And according to the newspapers, the police are treating that as a pure theft not as an antisemitic desecration. The brass is very expensive. You can sell it in the secondhand market. Yes, I've seen it.

What do you think of that?

It's impressive. I've seen the photographs. We've had an exhibit of the photographs of that particular exhibit at the Magnes Museum. I know the photographer very well who did that, and I know the sculptor who did it. It's an impressive figure.

But it's hard to convey. It's very hard to convey the real horror of it all, and I go back to what I said when we started off this session. It's very hard to convey it. I remember seeing that film, The Holocaust, the television show, not film, television show, a series of one or two-hour shows for a period of days.

Well, I remember that scene where the doctor and his former patient and friend walking towards the gas chambers and kind of joking. They didn't look like they'd been in the concentration camp. They looked too well-fed.

And it's hard to do. I mean, you can't take an actor for a movie and starve him for three or four months so that he looks like somebody-- you can try to make it up. Makeup and so on will do some of it. But it's very tough, very tough to really bring back the actual happening, the fear.

You stand there at roll call, and it's ice-cold. And the whistled right through you, through your ribs. And you don't know whether you're even going to make it to breakfast. It's 5:00 in the morning. It's hard to convey that.

I'm sure it is.

It's even hard to remember.

I'm sure-- I'm sure it is really difficult to translate that for anybody else.

So what you remember, which is normal in the human mind-- you remember the funny things that happened. You remember the fact that you survived. But you didn't know that you were going to survive. You didn't know that you-- I didn't know I was going to be there five months.

And there's something about translating the reality into words that--

Very difficult.

--misses the point.

It's very difficult.

The words just can't have the emotion of what you're feeling.

That's right.

So that whole translation process loses the impact.

It's filtered. It's filtered. Your memories are filtered through time. You forget some of the things. Sometimes you remember something that, all of a sudden, comes to mind. Here, this is what happened.

And there are people-- Eli Wiesel is one of them-- who try to convey that as eloquently as he can, and he's eloquent. He's very good, both in writing and in speaking. And I've heard him speak. And there are others that may be good or that are good, but it's hard.

What did you think of Primo Levi? He kind of reminds me of-- the way he writes is kind of the way you talk, I mean, with such detailed precision and everything. And I was always just so impressed by the details he remembered. I thought he did a good job of translating.

And then there are some novels that are based loosely on the Holocaust. I think *The Last Just Man*-- was it? What was that?

Oh, yes, *The Last of the Just*.

The Last of the Just. That's one of them.

It's a wonderful book.

Excellent, excellent.

I think that's probably--

And they can bring it--

--poignant book that I have ever read about the Holocaust.

Yeah, they can bring it to mind.

Yeah, by Schwarz-Bart.

Or a little capsule like the story I mentioned to you from *Moment* magazine, from the-- that scene on the plane, the Israeli plane that's taken off from Buenos Aires for Israel. And the air crew at that moment is informed whom they have on board, Eichmann, and their crew chief breaks down. You read that, and tears come to your eyes. All of a sudden it hits you.

Little vignettes kind of translate the message.

That's right.

Any movies that you've seen that you thought conveyed the message?

Well, sure, of which I've seen the part was very stark in the cold-blooded, cold-blooded telling by former SS people. One of the famous scenes in *Shoah* is the discussion and the-- the man who was-- the SS officer who was from one of

the camps in Auschwitz or whoever he was, doesn't even know he's been photographed.

And he's being interviewed about what's going on in the camp. Is it really true that you killed and gassed 20,000 people a day? And he said, oh, that's a gross exaggeration. He says, no, no, maybe 16,000, at the most 17,000, not 20,000.

Like it's a job. How many typewriters you turn out every week? 700? No, no, at the most 500. Or Eichmann, when you discussed his activities with one of the guards, in fact, with the man who captured him-- again, it's on the plane to Israel and sometime afterwards. He can't understand what all the fuss is all about. He really had nothing to do with it. I didn't know it was going on the camps. My job was to transport them, and that's what I did. And I did a great job.

But didn't you realize-- well, yeah, but I had nothing to do with that. My job was transportation. I'm very proud that I did such a great job. In fact, I had a lot of difficulties with the German army. They wanted to take my trains away to move troops, and I just wouldn't let them do it. I had a job to do. I had to move those Jews to Auschwitz, and Birkenau, or whatever, and I'm very proud of it.

But don't you realize there were children there? Yeah, I know, but after all, it's a job. I did the job right. What's the matter with you? That's the kind of thing that gets you, the mind, the doublethink.

The incident which I also related about where my father's cousin had been released from Buchenwald, Dr. Emil-- Dr. Julius Fackenheim, the father of Dr. Emil Fackenheim, was a very well-known rabbi and philosopher in Israel. And he'd been released in the middle of December. And about a week, 10 days later, I was called up to department one at Buchenwald, and I was taken into an office by an SS officer.

And he said, do I know Dr. Julius Fackenheim. I said, sure do, yes. And where is he? I said, well, he released about a week, 10 days ago. Oh, where did he go? I said, I assume he went back to Holland. Why do you want to know? And he said, well, we found a savings account passbook, and we've got to return it to him, registered mail. We want to be sure he gets it.

I think I said Kafka. That kind of thing that-- that's the German mind. At the same time, this fellow wouldn't have had any hesitation to either beat him or me to death. But now that he was out of the camp, I have to return his property.

Strange.

And that's Eichmann. That's a lot of these people. That's the fellows interviewed in Shoah.

What impressed me about Shoah, I remember the little boy who had such a golden voice-- that was in the first part of the Shoah. And they used to-- the soldiers used to, every morning, I guess, take him down in the boat, and he would be-- they'd make him sing the whole trip down. And the villagers, the Polish villagers, years and years later--

I remember that.

--when the crew went back, they said, oh, sure, we remember him. He was the one with a golden voice. We called him Little Boy With the Golden-- oh, sure, we know him. We were-- like they blocked out everything that was going on, and it was like they didn't put this little boy in the context of his being from the concentration camp.

No, they wouldn't put that together. They didn't experience it. They were non-Jewish. They didn't have the problem. Concentration camp is something that they heard about maybe, and if they did hear about it, that built a shell around themselves. There was someone I don't want to talk about because I might get into trouble.

The real problem right now is the answer to the question, could it happen again? And I think it could. There's no such thing as never. It can never happen again? There's no such thing.

In 1492-- that's just about 500 years ago-- the Jews of Spain were told to get out of Spain in one night, 24 hours, out, finished. Well, today no one really talks much about it. It's a historical footnote, not to us as much as to others. More

people remember that 1492 was the year in which Columbus discovered America for the second time. Eric the Red discovered it earlier.

But there was Columbus and his allegedly Jewish mapmaker, Amerigo Vespucci. So America is named after a Jew after all. But this happened 500 years ago, and when you read exodus, the second book of the Bible, chapter one-- you read in 21-- I think it's 21 very short verses how the family of Jacob came to Egypt, and grew, and became the people of Israel, not the family of Israel but the people of Israel, and how they got very numerous.

And then pharaoh got nervous about it and decided to wipe them all out. So it's happened before, and if you don't watch out, it's going to happen again.

So what do you think the Jews should do to be vigilant about this?

Be very careful, very vigilant, be very vigilant, very vigilant, as vigilant you can be. Don't look for another guy with a little mustache and a hair slicked back. Maybe the next guy has a kindly face and has no hair at all.

What are the warning signals that Jews should be aware of?

Any infringement of personal liberties, any infringement of personal liberties.

On a group.

On a group.

On a group.

On a group, whether that is an infringement of the liberties guaranteed in this country by the Constitution or in other countries similarly. Some very nice people might turn out to be not so nice at all. Hitler looked nasty, and everybody is looking around. Is there another guy around with a mustache? The next guy doesn't have a mustache.

Are you concerned about that now--

Oh, yeah.

--about that happening?

Oh, yeah.

And what makes you concerned? Do you see antisemitism on the rise?

I'll give you an example. You remember McCarthy, Senator McCarthy?

Mm-hm.

I remember during Senator McCarthy's time Joe Asher, who passed away a little while ago, a Rabbi at Temple Emanuel, and I were having lunch. And he said-- well, he says, I can always go back to Australia. I still have Australian citizenship. I'm a member of the Australian Air Force during the war. And he says, where are you going to go? And I said, I don't know where I'm going to go, maybe Canada, maybe somewhere.

But we were giving some serious thought of getting out of the United States because it looked like there was another Hitler coming, except his name was McCarthy, and he spoke English. You just don't know.

And you've got to read the books of people, and you got to read their opinions if they happen to be judges. If we had read the book that Hitler wrote, Mein Kampf, and if we had believed it, we would have gotten out in 1925, 1926. He

wrote it in 1923.

He said in the book what he was going to do. Crazy, he isn't going to do it, a lot of baloney. He's never going to make it. And when he was elected, well, the next election they're going to vote him out again, and he isn't going to do that. He just got to say that to get elected. But now he wants to do business internationally, and so he can't really do all these-- well, he did. We were too complacent.

I'm not saying I was complacent. I was too young to know what's going on and make decisions, but a lot of German Jews thought that they were more German than Hitler. And that's why-- don't pay attention to an Austrian corporal.

And so, not believing Hitler's book, they stayed, and I. So you've got to be careful. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Somebody said that. I didn't know, I know. I just repeat that.

Well I want to thank you very much. I want to make sure you get across the Bay before the traffic.

My pleasure. Yeah, I think I will.

Thank you very much.

By the way, this audio tape-- this is off the record now?

You want me to turn this off?

Yeah, I think so.