

1 Steinberg

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2 INTERVIEW WITH: Stanley Steinberg

3 INTERVIEWER: D. Indyke

4 DATE:

5 PLACE:

6 TRANSCRIBER: Linda Fisher, CSR

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9 INDYKE: Okay, why don't you tell me your
10 name and where and when you were born?

11 STEINBERG: My name is Stanley Steinberg. I
12 was born in ^{Rotham} Rotham, Poland, in 1927.

13 INDYKE: And can you tell me what ghetto
14 you were put into during the war?

15 STEINBERG: I was in the Rotthamer ghetto,
16 City of Rotham, Poland.

17 INDYKE: And what concentration camp were
18 you in?

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20 STEINBERG: We had a concentration camp in
21 Rotham going on for quite awhile until they transferred
22 us to Auschwitz, and they made a selection to send us on
23 to Germany out of there. They took away the women and
24 children and old men; the women remained in Auschwitz,
25 and of course, the children and the old people went that

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2 same day, and we were liberated in Germany in 1945. The
3 day was April 4.

4 INDYKE: So you went from Auschwitz to
5 where?

6 STEINBERG: To a little town called
7 *Wechingen*
8 Vickengen (ph) near Stuttgart. We--the work we did there
9 was laying tracks leading into where there was an
10 underground factory being built, and then they were doing
11 digging for this factory that was built.

12 INDYKE: How long were you there?

13 STEINBERG: We were there a few months, and
14 then we were transferred, a group, a portion of our group
15 was transferred to another camp called Vunsareksigan
16 (ph), that was about ten miles outside of Reinkingen
17 (ph), and over there we worked in tunnels.

18 INDYKE: I see. What occupation did you
19 have before the war?

20 STEINBERG: Occupation? I didn't get a
21 chance even to finish high school.

22 INDYKE: How old were you?

23 STEINBERG: The war broke out, I was like
24 eleven years old or something like that, eleven, eleven
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2 and a half.

3 INDYKE: And how old were you when you were
4 doing all that work of laying tracks?

5 STEINBERG: About fourteen.

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7 INDYKE: Can you tell me what--did anyone
8 else in your family survive the war?

9 STEINBERG: Yes, my brother survived, and
10 my father survived, and nobody believed it after the war,
11 they saw three people out of one family surviving. The
12 good part about is was we were together and I was young
13 enough to get around to help them.

14 INDYKE: So you all stayed together
15 throughout the entire war?

16 STEINBERG: Not quite. We got separated
17 about six weeks before the end of the war.

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19 INDYKE: And how did you find each other
20 again?

21 STEINBERG: I found them on the same train
22 I was being transported on.

23 INDYKE: That's amazing.

24 STEINBERG: When I found them, it was sort
25 of like a miracle. I was taken to a train with sick

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2 people. In the last six weeks my brother and father were
3 in this camp not far from where I was called ^{Neckargerach} Nechejerach
4 (ph), on the ^{Neckar} Necca River there was a camp there, and they
5 just kept them there. A lot of them died while we were
6 there, and my father and brother survived this time that
7 they were there, and when they loaded up the train, as
8 the Americans were coming in, they tried to move the
9 people, they were busy moving people that were half dead,
10 I don't know why they were doing it instead of just
11 leaving them alone and running for their own lives, they
12 still kept up the thing until the end, so they added
13 sixty people out of my camp, sick ones, we were in a sick
14 room, the people out of my camp walked out, they walked
15 to Dachau, and they got there. It was just a few days
16 before the end of the war, but somehow they got around
17 all the fighting and the sixty people that they added to
18 this transport happened to come from Nechejerach, and
19 about four days after the war on the train, when we
20 opened up the boxes that they left standing in a little
21 down called ^{Osterbruchen} Austerbruchen (ph) in Germany, in Baden, the
22 old trainmaster told them, told the SS guards that they
23 shouldn't go on any further because the Americans had
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2 crossed the tracks already, so of course they got scared,
3 and they pushed the train back inbetween, like, two hills
4 and we were just standing there for, quite a few days, I
5 would say, now, like three or four days.

6 The second day we broke out of the trains, and
7 we just stood around the train, didn't know what was
8 happening, we didn't know where we were. I escaped on the
9 fourth day, into the woods, and it was pretty dark at
10 night, and I fell into an American foxhole, crawling with
11 a broken arm, and it was on Passover.
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13 INDYKE: Oh, boy.

14 STEINBERG: April 4th, and it was, I don't
15 know if it was fate or whatever, the first man I saw in
16 the foxhole, I almost got choked to death because I had a
17 German uniform on turned inside out. The guards, what
18 they did was, they threw off the SS uniforms and they put
19 on, like Air Force uniforms so they're not recognized as
20 war criminals.
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22 When I got out of the car, I was naked, and
23 wrapped around in a blanket, so I found one of those
24 uniforms and I turned it inside out and put it on so I
25 wouldn't be cold, because it was still pretty cold. I

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2 turned it inside out, and when I got away that fourth
3 day, because we were being shot at from artillery, we
4 didn't know where the fire was coming from, people were
5 getting hurt. We found some linens in one of the cars
6 from the sick camp they had, and we made large crosses,
7 we put stones on them, so we weren't being shot at, so
8 mayby the Americans could have thought that we were
9 Germans. From far away, you can't tell. People were
10 getting hurt.
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12 I didn't know what happened afterwards, because
13 I left. Before I took off on the fourth day, I had found
14 my father and brother, and then I sort of like got away
15 to get help. I didn't know where I was going to. And when
16 I crawled into this forest on my hands and knees, I fell
17 into a hole, recognizing him, I never knew what an
18 American soldier looked like, by they happened to be
19 Americans, and I amost broke my head off, because they
20 didn't know who I was.
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22 INDYKE: What prevented them from killing
23 you?

24 STEINBERG: I hollered "prisonaire," like
25 in French. And after awhile they let me go, and the first

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2 thing I saw, it was unbelievable, I saw an American
3 soldier nibbling on matzohs. It was unbelievable. One of
4 the soldiers that was there was eating matzohs, and I
5 recognizd the Manischewitz label. I don't know if it was
6 his rations, or maybe it was sent from home, and I sort
7 of like fainted when I saw it, because I saw the Jewish
8 writing on it.
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10 Then he gave me the matzohs and I took it back
11 to the train, where the train was, and I gave it to some
12 of the people, the old people, and they sort of like,
13 they prayed over it like not having them for all that
14 time. Then I went back to the Americans, and they took me
15 to a hospital because I had a cast on my arm, and they
16 took me to a field hospital and checked my arm out. They
17 tried to feed me, I couldn't eat, because we got used to
18 not eating. I couldn't eat for days, just drink liquids.
19 And we survived, but all these years afterwards, you
20 look around here, and you look at these faces, I
21 recognize about five, six people out of my hometown. Of
22 course, I was a young boy when it all happened, but I
23 still recognize some of the faces. The faces, when I was
24 liberated, we lived together in Stuttgart, Germany, after
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2 the war, and they sort of like didn't recognize me,
3 because I was a little boy at the time, and now I'm 56
4 years old.

5 INDYKE: How did you end up in California?

6 STEINBERG: I came to California in 1948. I
7 lived in New York for two years. I went there on sort of
8 like a vacation with a friend of mine, and I remained
9 there.
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11 INDYKE: Did you get married? Are you
12 married?

13 STEINBERG: Yes, I got married in Los
14 Angeles.

15 INDYKE: So, tell me, what members of your
16 family did you lose? Did you lose your mother?

17 STEINBERG: I lost my mother, I lost my
18 brother, the younger brother than I, in '42 I lost a
19 brother that was 11 years old. He went away--according to
20 the knowledge we have he to ^{Treblinka} Ferblenke (ph), with my
21 mother, and we had a family of about 350 people in our
22 hometown, and there's only about four people alive, and
23 my father passed away since. My father died in 1953. He
24 was 52 years old. It's a miracle that he survived it,
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1
2 though.

3 INDYKE: Was he here, or he died in
4 Germany?

5 STEINBERG: He was in the United States. He
6 came together with us in 1946.

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8 INDYKE: Can you tell me a little about
9 what was so--let me understand this. When you were
10 working on the tracks, building the tracks for all that
11 time, you were also in a camp at that same time?

12 STEINBERG: Yes, we were, we were in a
13 concentration camp. But it was sort of like a working
14 camp. They fed us enough to survive to be able to work.

15 INDYKE: All men, it was all men in that
16 camp?

17 STEINBERG: Of course, all men.

18 INDYKE: Were people treated really badly?

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20 STEINBERG: As far as treating is
21 concerned, we were working like slaves, like we had to
22 carry two, three sacks of cement on our shoulder. We
23 weren't treated like human beings, we were treated like
24 animals. Animals are treated better than that.

25 INDYKE: How did--what do you attribute to

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2 the fact that you survived, I mean, what--because--

3 STEINBERG: Willpower. Just living from one
4 day to the other, that's all, just waiting. We knew that
5 they couldn't last forever, and we were hoping for some
6 people to survive so they could tell the story. I guess
7 I'm lucky enough to be one of them.
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9 INDYKE: What do you feel about--

10 STEINBERG: Sometimes I wonder if I was
11 lucky, because it gives us an awful lot to--

12 INDYKE: It's okay.

13 How do you cope with all the feelings that you
14 have?

15 STEINBERG: Sometimes it's impossible to
16 cope with them. My wife happens to be an American woman,
17 and these people are blessed, I guess; they don't have
18 these feelings, they didn't go through that. We'll live
19 with it, I guess we have to, because we were left alive.
20 When you look at these people, you know, I mentioned to
21 my wife and somebody we met, that this is unbelievable
22 that these people are still alive, even the German
23 government, they stated in the newspapers, that they're
24 very surprised. I saw the thing in the LA Times that
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2 they're very surprised that these people are still
3 living, that they lasted as long as they did, that
4 they're stronger than they thought. The Polish Jews are
5 known to be strong, they had to be strong, even before
6 the Second World War. They didn't have it easy.
7

8 INDYKE: Oh, yeah. That's where my
9 grandmother comes from.

10 STEINBERG: They didn't have it easy at
11 all. When I lived in the ghetto and I used to smuggle my
12 way out of the ghetto, I wasn't afraid of Germans, I was
13 a little boy. I was afraid of kids I went to school with.

14 INDYKE: What were you afraid of?

15 STEINBERG: That they'd give me up to the
16 Germans and I'd be dead. They would trip me in the side.
17 We ha to get out to get some food and whatever. So, now
18 we're successful people. We--I guess we're a people that
19 will go on.
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21 INDYKE: What do you do now?

22 STEINBERG: I was working in a shop in New
23 York. I started something that I never did before,
24 because my father was a ladies' clothes designer before
25 the war, and he was a ladies' tailor, custom, fine

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2 person, and I started something, they asked me what I
3 knew, I said I knew ladies' tailoring, so I did that. I
4 did that for a few years, I worked in Los Angeles for one
5 of the finest outfits in the United States, I worked for
6 Adrienne, everybody, people, all the people remeber
7 Adrienne. Then I went in my own business, I went in the
8 sewing machine business, and I stayed in it for about
9 seventeen, eighteen years. I was a salesman for a long
10 time for a well known company, I became a salesman,
11 dealing with the public, and I was successful with it.
12 After being a salesman, I went in my own business.

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14 I stayed in my business for a number of years,
15 I would say seventeen years. My son took it over. I am
16 sort of disabled. My back is crippled to a point where I
17 sometimes can't bend down, so I had to give up working.

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19 INDYKE: Do you feel good about your life?

20 STEINBERG: I feel good about my life, what
21 I did after the war. I mean, I started my own life, I
22 guess as a human being you have to contribute the best
23 way possible to make everything right. I feel happy I
24 have two lovely children. I have a grandchild. My
25 grandchild is right now going to be two years old. I have

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2 a lovely wife. We made a life, very good.

3 INDYKE: Is it hard to be married to
4 someone who didn't share the same experience as you
5 from--

6 STEINBERG: It isn't the easiest thing in
7 the world. That's why I keep it to myself, because like I
8 said before, I'm grateful and happy that some people of
9 our faith, of our religion, that are Jewish, didn't have
10 to go through what we did. It's impossible to describe
11 some of the feelings. People--I get asked questions once
12 in awhile how I feel about it. What can I say? How does a
13 person feel about it? I still dream about it. I still get
14 my nightmares. I still see the Nazis in my eyes. My
15 memory happens to be too good. I remember too much and
16 that's not good. I know friends that forgot 90% of it. I
17 can't forget it, see. That's why I have these feelings.
18 You go around and you see things, it reminds you of
19 things and I cannot describe that, I cannot talk about
20 it. I was asked to be interviewed, and I said okay,
21 because the lady was listening to some of the remarks I
22 made.
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25 I am very happy about this gathering. I didn't

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go to the one that happened in Israel, I couldn't at the time. But this one I was very happy to go to, so I could see some of these people. I got lost a few times from my wife, but she understood. But, this is a place where we can find each other.

I hope that this interview will help you.

INDYKE: I'm sure it will help. It will absolutely help. It was wonderful.