

Few of these things. They went out of fashion.

My mom was traveling from Russia to Paris in 1934.

Oh, really?

And of course, my mom's Jewish. And the Nazis-- at some point, she had to travel through Germany. The train from Moscow went right through. And they're all saluting her.

Right, right. So was your mom or your dad's family background from--

Russia.

--from Russia?

My mom was born in Ukraine outside of Kyiv.

So she came here as a child? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teenager.

As a teenager, yeah. Yeah. And your dad's family, was his?

He came from Belarus. He came when he was an infant.

Sure. So OK. My parents grew up in Poland. And they were-- I mean, they were, they would say, there was one Jewish strain of the family. But it was mostly Catholic. But my father was in the Polish Army in '39 and then managed to escape. It was Polish forces under British command.

So he escaped to Britain?

Eventually to Britain, yeah, long way through Yugoslavia to France, then evacuated by the Brits, and then in a Polish paratrooper unit based out of there. So yeah, we all-- a lot of personal history there. Right, right. But I've talked to some of the people who were or are still involved in OSI, and of course, read some of the accounts, and know about some about your role. But I would like to hear a little more. And frankly, I'm also looking-- I'm trying to really look at the personal-- where the personal interest came from.

Well, you should also look at my book. There's a book I wrote, called Who Said It Would Be Easy? And there are pages that I devote to this.

OK.

You could probably buy on Amazon--

I'm sure I can, yeah.

--for about \$0.28. The postage will be more than the book.

Oh, I know. I know. This all happens to all our books eventually.

But it does go into some little background about this. But before that, I mean, you should know before we get distracted, because you asked about who the Nazi Hunters were-- I mean, aside from the people in OSI, and I don't think there's anybody else aside from the people in OSI, there were two people in the immigration service before who were. I want to

say they were Nazi Hunters. I don't know that that's correct or that they were involved with the cases. There was one case.

Anthony DeVito?

Yeah, DeVito, and Vito, and them.

Yeah, Schiano, I think-- Schiano or Schiano, however you pronounce that, yeah.

You're right.

Did you know them at all?

Yes, I met them.

Yeah. And what were your impressions? Because I've heard very different things about them.

Well, Tony DeVito was kind of like a plodding sort of person was the impression that he gave you, but very decent. And what's his name, Victor Schiano, Vito? Something like that.

Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

He was an edgy, intense, very smart fellow. And they were both very dedicated to their task and very upset about the presence of Nazi war criminals here. I think they were both Italian background. I don't think they were any-- they never mentioned any Jewish--

Yeah, I don't think there was any Jewish connection.

--connection at all.

Yeah, yeah.

I don't know, are they still alive?

No, no. Both are gone. DeVito died-- oh, I think still in the-- well, around maybe '80, '98, a long time ago, Schiano, I think later. But they're both-- they haven't been here.

Well, I don't know. Their families may still be around. I think they we're very dedicated and very decent people.

Yeah. Well, when did-- I mean, yeah, a lot of people seem to have awoken a bit to this by, I mean, a couple of things that come up. And I just want to see whether any of these played a role in your own interest in how they registered. Of course, the Braunsteiner case, yeah, if you remember that.

I read about that. But I didn't-- I mean, it made an impression. But I never dreamed there were Nazi war criminals in America. That was just like, well, this person was here.

Yeah, it's sort of an aberration.

I didn't just think about how. Right.

Yeah, right. Right. And what about then in the mid '70s, there was this-- I think it was '77, Howard Bloom's book.

Oh, but that's after I started my work.

Yeah, that's true. That's true.

I started in 1974, in the spring of '74.

That's right. Right, right. So can you think, before '74--

That's what triggered this. And that's in my book. What triggered my work against Nazi war criminals in the United States was I was sitting in Washington. And someone came to see me. He was not working for the-- he might have been working for the government. But he didn't come to me in his governmental role. And I saw him with an aide. But my aide has no memory of this, maybe because for the aide it wasn't important. But for me, it was very important. And he said to me that he seemed normal in appearance, properly dressed, well-spoken, nothing--

This was a constituent or?

No, he was not a constituent. He was somehow connected with the immigration service, I don't know as an employee or - but he was connected with the immigration service. And it was in that capacity that I saw him because I was on the Immigration subcommittee. And that's why he wanted to see me. And he said to me that the US government had a list of Nazi war criminals living in the United States and was doing nothing about it. And he was very upset about that.

And my first reaction was this can't be true. The US fought Nazis in World War II. Why would we let them come here? And if they were here, why were we doing nothing? So it made no sense to me. But my mom taught me to be very polite to people so I listened to what he said. I said, this can't be true. I said, this cannot be true. I don't believe he was Jewish. His name had an Armenian kind of ending. But now that I'm more familiar with-- over time, with the fact that Iranian names, Iranian Jewish names can have an I-A-N ending, that's possible.

That he was.

He didn't say he was Jewish. I assumed he was Armenian. I've always assumed he was Armenian. But I don't know. And he thought that this was a horrific miscarriage of justice. And I think the reason he came to see me, because I was a brand new member of Congress, this is my very first term.

Right, yeah. You were elected in '74, right, or '72?

I was elected in '72, but I took office in '73. So this was the second.

Right, right, right, right.

I'm beginning to think that-- I don't remember now whether it was in the fall of '73 or the winter of '74, in that time frame. And I think he came to see me because I used to interrogate the immigration people. I wasn't timid. Maybe he saw that I was.

You didn't have a reputation for being timid.

Yeah, well, I didn't have very much of a reputation at that point. It was still early in my congressional career. But he came to me. He didn't say why he came to me. But I'm just inferring, looking back. Anyway, even though it made no sense, I couldn't put it out of my head entirely. And so the next time that the immigration officials showed up for a hearing-- and they would regularly come because we were the Oversight Committee. So the commissioner of immigration would show up, and his-- not all, but the top staff. They showed up. This for sure is in '74.

This is before the committee or talking to you personally?

No, before the subcommittee. So they show up before the subcommittee, some regularly scheduled oversight hearing over the immigration service. And when it comes to me, I'm low person on the totem pole. I'm probably the last person who gets to ask questions. I ask the commissioner, is it true that the immigration service has a list of Nazi war criminals

living in the United States? I mean, I expected him to say, no.

He said, yes. OK. I almost fell off my seat. OK. So then my next question was-- that was a pretty direct, blunt answer. So my next question, well, what are you doing about this list? And that's when I got the smokescreen of words, cloud of words, like a miasma of words.

And this was the director?

Yes, this was the commissioner of the immigration service. So he said, yes. That meant they had the list. But I couldn't get an answer about what they were doing about it. So I said to him, I want to see all the files. I didn't have any idea whether I had a right to see the files. But I didn't know what to do because I wasn't prepared for a yes answer. So I asked to see the files. And he said, OK, I could see the files. And they were actually in New York. And maybe because DeVito and Schiano-- not Schiano.

Schiano, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Yeah, Schiano. Oh, it's Ciano who was Mussolini's--

Yeah, yeah, the foreign minister. Yeah, yeah, no. This is S-C-H.

Schiano, OK. So they were in New York. And I went to some office building. And they had some files. And there was a table like this, such a big table, more or less this size. Maybe it was smaller. And I started taking the files out one by one. And file number one, I don't remember the names, but I'll give you the overall story.

Take out file number one, it says, John Doe on the top of it, allegation. And I open the file. Inside, allegation, John Doe shot Jewish people in, let's say, Riga, I don't remember where it was, as chief of police. Next page. We traveled to visit John Doe at his home in Minneapolis. This is making this up.

Yeah, no, I understand.

And we knocked on the door. And John Doe came to the door. And we said, how are you feeling, John Doe? We are from the immigration service. And John Doe said, I'm feeling fine, thank you very much. And they said, the immigration service said, thank you very much. Goodbye. That was file number one. And file number two was about Richard Roe. And exactly the same thing, except it wasn't Minneapolis, and it wasn't police chief, and it wasn't Riga, it was Ukraine.

They were literally just going and--

Knocking on the door and asking how they were feeling. I read about five files. I said, how many of these do I have to read? I didn't read every one of them. I just said, OK, this is the story. This is the story. So after that, I prepared a-- I got my staff together. And we worked on a press release and a press conference, in which I said, the immigration service has a list of 53 alleged Nazi war criminals living in the United States. And it's doing nothing serious about this list.

And this is outrageous because we fought Hitler during World War II because 50,000-plus Americans gave their lives to stop Hitler. And his henchmen are being allowed into this country, I said. And then I said, we cannot become a sanctuary for mass murderers in World War II.

And then I outlined a list of things that had to be done-- create a special unit, create an administrative apparatus, look for evidence not just in the United States, but all over the world, assign specially-dedicated professionals to this task. I don't remember the whole list. I'm sure some-- I mean, it's in a library. And I've sent my papers to whoever-- the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe. I'm sure they're all there.

The Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe?

Yeah.

OK.

So I had a press conference. It was reported in the press. And from that time on, I tried to get the administrative apparatus set up because I knew that without a proper administrative apparatus, there was going to be no way to track these Nazi down, Nazi war criminals down, I mean. And who knows whether the number was really what it was, really 53? Maybe the number should have been 200 or 2,000.

It was clear that the immigration service was, at best, a reluctant enforcer, and at worst, a non-enforcer. I mean, at that time, I didn't know anything about why the immigration service wasn't doing this, whether there was some agenda aside from bureaucratic incompetence. I just wanted to make sure that we got this program on track and in a way that could be carried out in accordance with the highest standards of professionalism. That was my objective.

Did you know if list-- because in this book, Howard Bloom's book, Wanted, he says that DeVito had a list from this guy, what was the name, [? Carpack ?] from the World Jewish Congress, which has something like 57 names. Do you think it's the same list?

Yeah, I think it's the same list. And I think it was from-- I'm not sure if it was the World Jewish Congress or American Jewish Congress. But they got the list from some Jewish group. They meaning the immigration service got the list from a Jewish group. And it was clear they were doing nothing about it.

So it may have been-- did you ever talk to-- you didn't talk to DeVito whether this was the same list? Do you have any recollection of that? Yeah.

To me, it didn't make any difference.

Yeah, right, right. I'm sure.

I mean, they could have had 10 lists. They still were not doing anything about that. So the important thing was, first, to get an apparatus. And then you could take all the lists, plus, I said, to start the search all over the world. They weren't even looking. I mean, all they were doing was knocking on the alleged perpetrators' door. They weren't going to the Berlin document center. They weren't going to Israel. They weren't looking for any documents. They weren't looking for any evidence.

Right, right, right.

They just maybe were waiting to see whether these people were going to die off. And that would definitely-- they could cross them off the list.

Check them off the list. Yeah, yeah.

I really don't know why they were asking about their health. I never bothered to ask them because frankly, it didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was to get a proper operation in place, from my point of view.

Right, right, right, right. And in terms of first, you--

But I didn't work with any Jewish groups in doing this. Nobody triggered this except this anonymous person who came to see me.

Yeah, he just came to see you on the Hill, yeah.

In my office, Longworth House office building. And I guess he didn't know what he was going to find because nobody had done anything about this problem since World War II. And the fact is that when I look through some of the files,

maybe it was that time, or it might have been something else at a later point, but I saw that there were letters to members of the House and the Senate, including Jacob Javits, saying, I saw-- from just people, saying, I saw my former concentration camp guard on the street. Could you look at this?

And I would see the letter from-- I saw the letter from the Senator to the immigration service, saying, please, look into this. And the immigration service wrote back and said, we have no evidence that the charge is correct. They didn't say, we didn't look.

Yeah, right, right, right.

They didn't say, we may have suspicions. They said, we have no evidence. Well, and the Senator bought. Whoever got it just--

Just wrote it off, saying--

Right. It wasn't like what happened when I asked the question, and got the answer, and then said, I want to see the files. That's all. So people did make inquiries. But it was a most superficial kind of inquiry that was made. So there was really no serious effort up to this point, aside from whatever DeVito and Schiano did. I don't know how that Braunsteiner Ryan case came to their attention, either.

Well, I can tell you. I mean, it came to their attention because Wiesenthal in Vienna contacted someone from the New York Times.

Oh, I see.

And then Joe Lelyveld-- I don't know if you know Joe, he later became the editor-- I've talked to him about this. He's a junior metro reporter in 1964 and says, there's this woman. Can you check and go out and see her, if you can find her, and do a story, and he just literally went out to Long Island--

Queens.

--yeah, Queens, and knocked on her door.

I think she lives there, yeah.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Is it Maspeth or somewhere?

Somewhere, yeah, something like that.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And he did a one-day story. And it's 1964, it was a fairly prominent story. But then it got caught up in efforts, in litigation. And the thing dragged on until 1971, when the German government got interested because they were doing a Majdanek trial. And finally, she gets basically run out of the country then. And she gets retried then.

Yeah, there were a few other cases. There was the case of Artukovic.

Yes, yes.

But there was no coherent, consistent effort in the immigration service to do anything about these cases. And as I said, that's how it got started. And of course, I'm a little bit like a bulldog. And I don't give up till we finally get everything right and in place, which is what happened, ultimately, before I left the Congress. We got the law changed. We got the special unit set up.

Yes. Because initially--

All of those things happened. Yeah, the first thing that happened was that when I-- was that when Carter became president-- I think it was when Carter became president.

This special litigation unit?

Yeah, they set up a unit in--

INS.

--in INS. That was a-- they tried, but it's like being on the Titanic, being in the immigration service at that point. They couldn't get-- they had to travel abroad. They couldn't get permissions. They couldn't get paper clips. It was not the right place to be. And that's why one of the things that I did when I became chair of the Immigration subcommittee was to move that unit out of the immigration service and put it in the Department of Justice criminal division. I figured that was the most professional division in the department, that they would know how to conduct serious investigations, and that was the right home for a professional unit that was going to track these people down and bring them to justice.

Remember, I mean, I was DA after I left Congress. It's extremely hard to prove a case, including a murder case 20 years later, 30 years later. These cases were old. And the Nazis didn't want to leave witnesses. They didn't want to leave documents. So proving these cases were going to be extremely difficult. And you needed to have really trained expert people who were devoted to doing the task properly and to meeting the US standards of justice.

Yeah. Well, also, wasn't it already the debate was going on-- and this was happening in Germany too-- where there just the fact of being, say, an Auschwitz guard or--

We were having no debate about that issue. That wasn't a debate.

At that point, there was none of that? Yeah.

Not here. I mean, there might have been some in some journals or whatever. But that wasn't the debate. Actually, the first case that went to the US Supreme Court was argued by the then-Attorney General-- I'm blocking his name now, lives for Maryland, very nice fellow. And he personally argued the case before the US Supreme Court. And that involved a concentration camp guard at Treblinka, Fedorenko.

Fedorenko, yeah, yeah, yeah.

So no one was raising the degrees of culpability. These people couldn't come to this country anyway if they hadn't told the truth about those types. So that's really the story. And it took till I became chair of the immigration subcommittee. So it took another four years.

When did you become chair, do you remember?

1979, January '79. That was one of the first things I did. I called the Justice Department. And I said, I want to move the Nazi hunting unit into the criminal division.

And in '78, you had that amendment, which already defined. But that did not actually set up oversight.

Right, yeah, so the administrative-- more important than the amendment was the administrative work that I did, creating this special unit and making sure that it was housed properly in the US government. And the response to that was-- from the Justice Department was over my dead body.

Really? Yeah.

Yeah, well, the person actually wound up leaving. And the unit got set up. I said to them, look, you could do it voluntarily or I can write it into law. I said, this unit's getting set up.

Who was attorney general in '70?

It was-- yeah.

That was not Ramsey Clark's bill?

No, no, no, no, no. I'll think of his name, very nice, decent, honorable person was the attorney general. And he argued, personally argued the case. I mean, attorneys general don't generally argue cases before the Supreme Court. Every once in a while, when it's a really special case, they will do that. And for him, this was a really special case.

And so yeah, so the Justice Department wasn't initially very happy at the idea of having this unit housed there. But when it was transferred there, then they undertook the responsibility of picking somebody who had very serious credentials, not in any way to minimize Marty Mendelsohn, who did an amazing job, even though.

Yeah, Marty did it. He did the special litigation unit, first, right? But then he originally became the--

No, they never go Walter--

Rock?

--Rockler--

Rockler, yeah, yeah.

--who had been involved in the Nuremberg trials.

But Marty was there very briefly.

He might have been. Rockler was there for a very short time. And then they brought in Allan Ryan. And I interviewed Allan Ryan because I was really concerned that they have somebody who was professional, honorable, and committed to the mission. Ryan tells a funny story. He said, I made him stand up during the interview.

Oh, really?

But that's not true. I mean, he's just joking. He said, I wouldn't let him sit down until he assured me that he was going to do a good job. But he was-- I didn't know him at all. But he was extremely professional, very smart. And he did an excellent job.

Had Rockler been there only to set it up?

I have no idea. But he was out very quickly. I know I don't know why, what happened. And doesn't matter because Allan Ryan took over and did a brilliant job. And I think it's a testament to the professionalism that even during the Reagan years, with Russia's the evil empire and all that stuff, that Ryan and this special unit were able to go to the Soviet Union on a professional level, prosecutor to prosecutor, and do depositions, cross-examine people.

Ryan had to explain what cross-examination was before this happened because they thought they would just freak out to see this kind of a procedure. Defense counsel came. And the US government came. And they undertook these depositions. It was also searching for documents and evidence. So there was a-- I don't know, partnership may be too strong a word. But a professional relationship was struck in the handling of these cases.

And actually, the interesting thing was in-- it must have been in '76, when we went to the Soviet Union, the subcommittee. And we went there to deal with the issue of freedom of immigration. And Joshua Eilberg, who was the chair, we were meeting with the deputy-- no, with the procurator general of the Soviet Union. And we were, of course,

having fights with him about freedom of immigration and free speech. It was a very testy and very hostile, antagonistic meeting.

And then Congressman Eilberg asked, when we were finished fighting, I asked him about Nazi war criminals, and said there were Nazi war criminals in America. And would his government help us in that project? And it was night and day. And we stopped. He stopped fighting us, the procurator general. And he said, we will cooperate in any way we can on these cases.

So of course, the evidence from Soviet Union was very carefully scrutinized and with a lot of skepticism, which generally should be the case. But it was an important source of information. And in the midst of the Cold War, to be able to establish a professional relationship, just professional to professional, was, I think, a very important accomplishment. I give Allan Ryan huge credit for that.

Yeah. Is he-- he's up in Boston, I think?

Yeah, he's at Harvard.

Is he at Harvard? Yeah, yeah. I've read his book. It's very well presented, that period. And then you had Neal Sher and Eli Rosenbaum. Have you followed? What do you think of the unit's performance from then on?

Well, I'm basically very proud. I think they did what they were supposed to do. I mean, no country in the world has done anything more than we have and in this period of time, since '74. And I think the important thing is that the cases have been handled in a professional manner, in accordance with the Constitution, in a way that sets a historical record. There are Nazi deniers that denied the Holocaust.

Well, every trial, and every jurisdiction, in every part of this country-- and there have been trials all over the place-- have managed to prove the contrary. So they create a historical record. They show that the United States is not going to become a sanctuary for Nazi murderers, and mass murderers, and as the French say, *genocidaires*.

And this is important for those who gave their lives fighting Hitler, for the victims of Hitler's war crimes and crimes against humanity, and as a signal to future generations that I hope that hasn't worked out. Because we still have had genocide since World War II in Rwanda and Cambodia, two especially egregious places. But still, we have to do what we can do. And that was important.

So it's as much an educational role as--

No, the primary role is to do justice. And from doing justice, you achieve several other objectives-- you educate about the facts of what happened, you educate about how to handle these cases, you educate about the harm and injury that happens as a result of genocide. And you also create a deterrent, one hopes.

Yeah. Were you ever frustrated by the fact that, as you know, as someone who's been a DA and so forth, that the limit of what the United States could do, of course, was to--

Oh, there's nothing we can do. Right.

--denaturalize and--

And deport.

--and deport if you can find some place to deport to.

Well, I mean, you could be frustrated. But there was no way the Constitution was going to change. There's no way you're going to change the *ex post facto* law in the Constitution. That was not going to happen. No point in being frustrated about that. That was just the way it was going to be.

That was it. Yeah, yeah.

And so the bigger effort was-- but I wasn't in Congress then-- was to try to get these foreign countries to prosecute the Nazi war criminals when they were sent there. Unfortunately, nobody really took up the cudgels of this issue after I left Congress. So could more have been done? I believe more could have been done.

I mean, when I was there, we set up this unit, we got the law through, Senator Kennedy, sponsored it in the Senate. We got appropriations for this unit. We stopped. We issued a resolution, congressional resolution against Germany's abolishing the statute of limitations on imposing a statute of limitations on mass murder. And we got the unit to function in a professional manner, to seek evidence worldwide, to seek-- and to try to get more cases.

And they succeeded against all odds. Nobody-- I mean, if you talk to Eli, he'll probably tell you that when the unit was first set up, there was a deputy attorney general. I think his name was Mark Richards.

Yeah, Mark Richards, that's right. Yes.

And he said, well, if they do two cases, it'll be amazing. Yeah. So there were very low expectations of what could be done. But of course, they used new prosecutorial methods. They used historians to create the context so that you could draw conclusions from not necessarily where this person was specifically, but what the unit was doing. I mean, all of this stuff were things they had to pioneer. And they did. So I'm actually-- I think they did an amazing job under the circumstances to prosecute cases that were, at that time, a minimum over 30 years old.

Yes. Yeah, yeah. And Eilberg, was he as committed to this as--

Well, I think he was. But he just didn't get it started in the way that I did. I mean, he did get the agreement from the Soviet Union, from the procurator general, and then followed up with the State Department. He had to write letters to Kissinger and so forth to follow through on this, which happened. But I mean, I understood-- maybe it was my understanding that you needed not just a law and not just an agreement from other countries to help, but we needed a proper administrative apparatus. And I don't think Eilberg was interacting. I'm not criticizing in any way.

Yeah, no, I understand.

But I was interacting with Marty Mendelsohn all the time. I was involved in all of these cases, what's happening in these-- I was constantly talking to them about the cases they were bringing, what's happening with them.

When Marty was bringing the special litigation unit. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And I was very involved in all the cases. What are they doing about that? I used to sit down with them and say, well, what are you doing about these cases? I mean, I hope you're doing more than knocking on the door and asking how people are. I wanted to make sure they were doing that.

Marty later worked for you, right, for a while? Never on staff?

Never

I thought. Yeah.

Never.

Yeah. All right. I mean, I think those are really the main things I wanted to ask about. I guess, the one other thing about getting back to-- circling back to DeVito, it's interesting. You have a very positive impression of him. And most people do. But then he was on this list with Howard Bloom, on this sort of rampage about saying there was a Judenrat within the INS that was somehow blocking these things. And I never could quite figure out where that came from. I mean, do

you have any idea what he was talking about?

No. I mean, my point was, and I felt strongly about this, we could find out all the reasons about why nothing was done, all the roadblocks that existed, were put in the way. That wasn't going to solve the problem. Right before me was the problem of how we bring these people to justice. That was a problem now, confronting me at that time.

The past, the historical question, that could be dealt with later. But the pressing question, the immediate question was how to bring these people to justice now, how to get these cases investigated now. And the fact that it was out of the hands of the immigration service, that was fine because immigration just became counterproductive as a place. I mean, even today, we know the immigration service is not one of the best-run agencies of the US government. You can imagine what it was like.

I'm shocked you say that.

Right. But the criminal division and the Justice Department people recognize it's a professional operation. And they do a professional job. And that's why it had to go there. No, I don't. I mean, later, if I had been in Congress longer, one of the things I would have done, which was ultimately done by Congresswoman Maloney, and I worked with her on this, was to create a commission that-- a panel, it wasn't a commission, but equivalent-- to examine how the Nazi war criminals got here, and how they stayed here, and to declassify all the government secret files on Nazi war criminals. So that was done. But that was done starting in 1999.

That was in '99. Yeah, I should look that up, yeah.

I mean, Clinton, the legislation was passed in '98. But the implementation started in '99 and lasted to 2007. So it was eight years just to get the materials declassified. But that was an important critical and vital historical effort. But that came-- in my opinion, it had to come later. So whatever happened with DeVito, whatever he was talking about was someone else can look at that, as far as I was concerned.

How do we get this show on the road? How do we get this operation moving and moving quickly, efficiently, and professionally in a way that, if you ask me this question 20 years after OSI was set up, I could say that it was done in a professional way, that we could be proud of, and other people could say that. That's what I wanted. And I think that we succeeded.

Do you have any feelings about now, where you know OSI has been officially-- is no longer OSI?

I'm sorry that that happened, actually. I don't think it should have happened because there's-- I think it should have happened when, finally, there were no more cases.

Yeah. And what do you think motivated that?

I don't know, some misguided bureaucratic sense. I mean, I think someone in the Senate wanted it. Somebody in the bureaucracy wanted. And remember, the Justice Department never wanted this unit.

Yeah. And did you sense that during this time--

But it wasn't going to stymie the cases anymore. There were a few of the cases. And the record was too strong. The Justice Department wasn't going to squelch these cases.

Right, right, right. And why do you think it was so reluctant to go out, to take this on? And why--

It wasn't even in the Justice Department. It's in immigration service, which is like a stepchild. I can't answer that question. I mean, somebody who's going to do some work in the archives, now that we finished the declassification, might find out. I mean, there could be a bunch of reasons, all of which could be true. It's just very bureaucratic. I mean, part of the reason, if you talk to Marty, he will tell you, couldn't function is because he couldn't get paperclips. He

couldn't get permission to travel, to get information in foreign countries, and so forth, and so on. So that's not deliberate, it's just they don't function that way.

it's just inertia, yeah. Yeah.

I mean, it's just very unprofessional, very difficult agency to operate in. And then, of course, it could be this is not a priority. These are old people, what do we care about them? Then there could have been people involved with national security, quote-unquote "national security issues." I don't really know. Somebody will write that story someday. I didn't have time, the luxury of going back and finding that out because we were trying to make sure that they were handling the cases that we had right in front of us. That was the critical thing.

Yeah. And in terms of popular attitudes towards this whole issue-- I mean, the early '70s, the mid '70s when you were starting on it, it was still a very different atmosphere when it came to how much attention do we really pay to--

Yeah, very-- right. It was--

--the Holocaust, what happened.

Right, I mean, there were no Jewish groups that were involved in this. This is before the Simon Wiesenthal Institute was created.

Yeah, in LA, the center. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Yeah, I mean, there was no US organization made up of the victims that was dealing with this problem at all. So what I did was, really, on my own initiative and because of this person who came to tell me this problem. Then, of course, the issue about the Holocaust became much better known, understood. There was never any real opposition. I mean, United States Congress isn't for Nazis. And so in the end, we just didn't have--

I hope not.

--opposition to the bills and to what I was trying to do. That didn't surface. Nobody wanted to be on the side of Nazi war criminals. And we had the support, not just of the Jewish War Veterans, which was a group that actually actively supported what we were doing when they found out about it, but the other veterans groups were supportive of our legislation and of the activities. Yes, there were some emigre groups that were very hostile.

Right, in the Baltic, Ukrainian communities, probably.

Not the Baltic so much, I didn't, but yeah, the Ukrainian communities. And of course, there's a funny story that I think is discussed in my book about-- [CELL PHONE RINGING] excuse me. I'll just turn this off.

If you need to get that, we can.

No, I'm OK. Well, the Reagan administration tried to stop a guy called Karl Linnas from being deported to the Soviet Union. They wanted to send him to Panama so he could spend his last in his--

His exile in Panama.

Yeah, and lolling on some beach and enjoying the nice weather. And we managed to foil that. They tried to do it on Passover when nobody-- no Jews would be around.

Really?

Oh, yes, but we foiled them. I even read about it.

Yeah, what happened to him? I can't remember.

Well, he was deported because we got to Panama. We got to the Panamanian Embassy. This is the second day of Passover. Every office of every Jewish organization is closed. And we called the Panamanian Embassy in Washington. We called the Panamanian Embassy in New York. They got very upset that people were paying any attention to this issue. We said, we're getting on a plane, coming down to discuss it with you. And by the time we got to Washington from New York, the Panamanian government already decided they were not taking Karl Linnas. So there was no place else to send him.

So that was what the Reagan administration tried to do. I can't say the president was involved with that, although the president did go to Bitburg. So I don't know what his attitude was about this kind of thing. But they did not want to, I guess, legitimate. I don't know what word you'd use to describe what they were concerned about.

Anyway, Karl Linnas went to Estonia. And it was Rudy Giuliani, actually, was the one who tried the case and appealed the case. This is a case that went up to the US Supreme Court. So I don't have any issue about the quality of evidence, the justice, or anything like that. And so he went there. He was actually-- he died in prison when Artukovic was extradited to Yugoslavia. It was done on condition that the Yugoslavian government give him a public trial.

But they did it.

With defense counsel, and he did. And he was convicted and sentenced-- I believe he was sentenced to death. I'm not 100% sure. Artukovic died on appeal. But I think the important thing was that these cases went up and down to the US Supreme Court. The evidence was spread out there.

There was a very-- if you're removing someone's citizenship, it's almost the same equivalent standard as beyond a reasonable doubt. It's clear and convincing evidence. It's a very, very difficult standard. So the evidence had to be there. It was challenged going up to the Supreme Court. And then if you deported them, you had another four bites at the apple. None of the Nazi's victims had any kind of justice the way these perpetrators did.

Of course not, yeah. Yeah. Well, thanks so much. This is really immensely helpful. I'm obviously not going to-- yeah, I'm sort of-- I've got to-- since I'm dealing with a big period of time and lots of countries, this will be-- it's going to be somewhat compressed. But this is really great.