--project, which will be by the same publisher, Simon and Schuster, which will be about--

Who published this?

Simon and Schuster.

All right. They're my publishers too.

Oh, great. Great. And it will be about for going after Nazis after the war, starting with Nuremberg and then talking about Nazi hunters, focusing on the hunters as much as-- more maybe even in some ways than the hunted, and telling the story from start to present, when this era is basically ending for natural reasons and sort of saying-- talking about this whole period. But I do want to start with some stories from Nuremberg. And so you're, even having done what you did for being a one-time visitor there, it's fascinating, your description of that.

And so what I just wanted to add, a few things that I've got is-- well first of all, let me just double check your date of birth, by the way, just so I won't forget.

September 19, 1924.

OK. And you're coming up on a birthday. Happy birthday.

Next week, Thursday. Yeah, OK. So in your books and in your letters, you talk about when you-- that scene, where you go in and you observe the defendants. For you, Goering was the dominant figure there on the bench, right?

Right. I described Goering as being-- and also the lawyer I stayed with commented that the whole defense organization, which was mostly American lawyers-- or the ones he associated with were American lawyers-- that Goering was the dominant-- just that the American press had-- had pictured him as a 300-pound addict buffoon. And he really was truly a very, very smart guy. And all of his peers in the prisoner's box acknowledged him as their leader, as did the lawyers.

And the one day I was there, they brought papers around to be observed by the accused. And most times they didn't pass them anywhere. They gave them to Goering, who if he thought it was of interest to Ribbentrop or Jodl or somebody, he passed it to them. But basically, if he approved it, the court assumed it had been approved by the accused.

Right. Right.

And I will add a thing that I think is significant that isn't in my book. As you know, I wrote the only biography or memoir of William Rehnquist, who was my closest friend.

Right. Right.

And Rehnquist was Justice Jackson's clerk at the time of Brown versus Board of Education, which became controversial. But he and I talked about my experience in Nuremberg because we saw a lot of each other, and how smart I thought Goering was, or how I thought. And he said-- he pointed out to me that Goering had made a fool of Jackson, which you may be aware of.

But Goering, most of the cross-examine-- of the trial, American trial, I guess was conceptually developed by Jackson, who made the introduction, but was handled by Tom Dodd, who later became a senator from Connecticut. And before that, had been prosecutor in Hartford.

But Jackson decided that he would interview-- he would cross-examine Goering himself. He was the famed prosecutor, and he accepted this as a challenge. And Goering won the challenge.

And Rehnquist was there too at the time?

No, but Rehnquist was Jackson's law clerk on the Supreme Court.

Oh, later.

Later, so he knew Jackson, and knew Jackson very well. He wrote-- he wrote the-- he drafted his opinions. That's what law clerks do.

Yeah. Yeah. Did Jackson seem to acknowledge that he'd been bested ever?

Oh, I don't know whether-- know that at all. I think law clerks or employees always enjoy having a few stories about how their bosses weren't as smart as-- aren't as smart as they think they are. So I wouldn't put much stock in that beyond the fact that Rehnquist right away picked up on the fact that Jackson had been bested.

Right. Right. Now you talk about what I found intriguing in your letter, the passage where you talk about your doubts about the trial. Where you say this is-- this is not-- you think this may be a mistake. Why did you feel that then? What was going through your mind?

I mean, you hadn't been one of those GIs who had actually seen the camps at that point. But you were hearing the testimony of 6 million that day and so forth.

Well that's correct. I hadn't seen the camps. But I had been to a large DP camp. When I was the driver for General Wetzel and somebody else who went with us, who I think I mentioned in the letter. But General Wetzel was the--

And where was that DP camp? In Germany or--

In Germany. I was the chief clerk in the confinement division of the provost marshal general's office. I guess you call it theater provost martial. And General-- I think his name was Theodore, but Wetzel's his last name-- was the acting provost marshal of Europe in the autumn in 1945. And DP camps were a major problem we forget.

Right. Right.

And there were thousands of people in this camp who couldn't-- who didn't know who they were.

Yeah.

They had no wallets, no identification cards. They'd been so beaten, if not literally beaten, figuratively beaten, that there they were. And they had to be fed and clothed, and you had to figure out what the hell to do with them. And it was a very moving experience for me. I was the driver. But you'd hear that-- well, at any rate, I was there with them, and we discussed it.

And I forget the-- it probably is in my letters, the name of the other man, who I believe was a academic or something who knew something about the DP problem. And I believe, I, in my letter, said I just couldn't understand. Patton was asked something about moving these DPs and recognize them. And he said, why the hell do you have to ask the Poles about Poland? Should you send these people back to Poland, where they didn't know what to do with them? Why not send them to France?

And at any rate, so I had had an experience.

Yeah. Yeah.

And the second experience, where I mentioned the-- I'm not going to write about the hangman. As the head of the confinement division up ahead, the chief clerk. But I'd been a clerk earlier. I was involved in typing orders or arranging for the execution of American soldiers.

Oh, these were for executions of American soldiers?

Right. That's how I knew the hangman. And I wrote an article about the hangman, the only article ever written about the Hangman as a personality. I wrote for the Dartmouth-- I have it on file here, if you'd care.

I would love to get that article. Yeah.

All right.

Yeah.

You want to just turn this off for a minute while I, say, get on my computer?

Sure. Sure.

Because that's the fastest-- I've used the--

Here it is. [INAUDIBLE]

Wonderful.

Now, here it is. Why isn't it Here it is. All right. This may actually also involve General Wetzel.

Great. Great. Wonderful. Now--

This is-- well, I'll tell you when in a minute. It's November or December of 1945.

Before you went to Nuremberg probably.

Within a week or two of when I went to Nuremberg.

Uh-huh. Yeah.

And the hangman was sent up to Germany to hang a couple of Germans, which we hung 300 of them.

We hung 300 Germans? Yeah.

Yeah we did.

How many orders did you type up? Or did you type up the German orders?

I typed some of those too. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah.

I had no idea. I meant-- a 19 or 20-year-old service boy doesn't-- he remembers that he typed up orders to execute people. That is not something you do regularly. All right, here's this order. This article I wrote in 1946. I had returned to Dartmouth. and--

Thank you so much.

And I wanted to write something about-- and the Nuremberg executions were the number one story.

Sure.

And I knew the hangman.

Yeah.

So this is a story about how the hangman came to Nuremberg-- to Frankfurt. And he defied all the rules, and the generals made a great fuss over him because he was the only hangman in the European theater.

Yeah.

And he didn't shine his shoes, and he didn't get shaved. I wouldn't go near the general's office without shining my shoes and shaving and doing everything else I might have to do and standing at attention the whole time I was there. I had never any generals. And he was the hangman.

And he hung the Nuremberg--

He hung all the people at Nuremberg. So I then-- I am then back at Dartmouth. And I have an excuse to write an article for a Dartmouth literary magazine, The Jack-O-Lantern.

Right.

And this is the article I wrote for the Dartmouth literary magazine, which I thought, and you may think otherwise, was a college undergraduate's idea of a New Yorker profile. We thought the Dartmouth Jack-O-Lantern was kind of what college undergraduate literary people thought was a New Yorker.

OK. Right. Right. Right.

And it's got little jokes in it and profiles. And here a guy writes a kind of a profile of an experience with the central figure at Nuremberg and everybody else, there's nothing left for me to write. But I knew this. And there it is.

Now, did he-- first of all, the Americans he was executing, were these for desertions.

I didn't hear you.

The Americans he was executing, were they for desertion?

No, only one. Only one American was executed for desertion. He was shot by a firing squad.

So who was he hanging for--

Almost all ended up with murders. They could be rapes and murders. They were quite-- I meant-- I actually have the figures, not very handy though.

No, that's all right.

But we executed several dozen Americans.

Yeah. Now, did you talk to him when he started, after he hung the Nuremberg [BOTH TALKING]

No. I was out of the army and back at Dartmouth. That's when I wrote in the-- I will give you a chronology. I worked on the pipeline that supplied gasoline to soldiers in Europe. And with the current news about gasoline being so important, you forget that in World War Two, the pipeline-- and there later were two more of them, but ours was the first-- pipe, supposedly, moved a half a million gallons of gasoline a day to run trucks and tanks and Jeeps and airplanes.

We built a tank farm on Utah Beach on D plus 2 because there's no way to run tanks and trucks and Jeeps without tank farms and pipelines.

Right. Right.

I worked on this pipeline in near Verdun, which was technically a combat area, but only because combat was defined in World War Two as including people who were in base hospitals and tank farms and pipelines. And so I was there. When the war was over, within a day or two, they canceled the pipeline. And within a week or two, we disassembled the pipeline. And in early June, it was shipped to Marseilles to go to Burma. And we were to go with it, I guess.

And I, fortunately, had made some contacts and got asked to go to the provost marshal general's office as a clerk.

Right.

The details are in the book. So my connection with executions begins late June of '45 and continues until January '46, when I went to the University of Geneva in the army.

So the executions after Nuremberg were--

The next October, October 46.

We had already been hanging some Germans, right?

Oh, Yeah.

Yeah. Did you have any different attitude about hanging Germans than Americans. Do you ever indicate that?

I don't know.

So you didn't have a sense that you--

I don't think-- I don't-- I've been asked similar questions. It was such a different kind of war. Life ran, well, a full picture spread of the first group of Germans we hung, which were in late June or early July of 1945. So that's six weeks after V-E Day. And they were hung basically as collaborationist, but for breaching the Geneva Convention, some clause of it.

And the Geneva Convention has a clause that provides that, if you should capture a uniformed soldier who left his unit, you were to turn him over to the military police and put him in a military jail, not just shooting because an unarmed enemy soldier. These were airmen, a couple of at least one airman. I think one-- bailed out of a plane that had been damaged in a raid.

American airman?

American airman. He landed in a tree, I think in a place called Rhinebeck. This is easily followed up on. If you later want me to help you with it, I've got these files. I can't get them right now right. And a farmer-- now this is in July of 1945. We're still fighting in the middle of France. We haven't gotten to Paris yet.

Thousands of American soldiers are dying. We're bombing German cities.

July '44, you know, you're talking.

July '45 is what-- '44 is what I mean.

Yeah.

And, yeah, that joy of-- they got executed the next year. So this airman bails out, and he's in a tree. And a farmer finds him, and he shoots him. He's uniformed.

Right. He falls out of the tree. In the meantime, a whole group of local citizens show up, and he isn't fully dead. And two other local citizens finish him off with a hammer. And then they were-- I don't know how they got into a jail, but they did. And we tried them immediately after the war for breaching the Geneva Convention for killing an American soldier in uniform who was unarmed. And we executed him.

Right.

And it was very unpopular. Has to do with the unpopularity of the hangman. So he was assigned to go to Rhinebeck and hang them, which he did. And there were others like this. So those are the-- most of the people he hung between-- in the period that I knew him, which is between May of-- June of '45 and January of '46, were Germans who would breached the Geneva Convention.

And this was very popular in the United States. Well, who the hell am I to judge popularity? He never talked about his attitude towards

The people who were staying.

No. And I would have to arrange for a rope, or a Chaplin present, or stuff like that. And I don't think I much wanted to talk to him, and it was my job to get him roped and chaplains and stuff. And I did it.

So you actually helped him get the rope and the chaplain.

Whatever he had to get, yeah. He might have needed lumber to build a scaffold and you had to have a surgeon there, to certify these guys dead. And, yeah, right. The equipment, what he-- if you have a military hanging, it's a show. You could shoot a guy much easier. And in those days, you could also give him a drug. This was a-- hanging is a special kind of humiliating procedure. Yeah. So you should fully understand because it applies to Nuremberg.

You really realize why it's so humiliating-- probably don't. Because when you die, all your sphincters lose their elasticity, Yeah. and then you're shook from the neck. You become a shitty mess.

Yeah. Yeah.

And that's only the beginning.

Yeah.

I mean, this is a-- I mean why would you-- why did hanging persist so long in Western society, except that this is to humiliate somebody. There were easy ways to kill people. We've known that for a long time.

But getting back to the question of why you felt Nuremberg was-- you were troubled by Nuremberg. You thought it was possibly a mistake.

Yeah, I-- all right, that's--

What did you feel then? What do you feel now?

I had some similar questions today. I mean, I'm-- I think ex post facto is a real question. That's the question Senator Taft rose-- raised, and the one Senator Kennedy-- President Kennedy picked up in Profiles of courage Profiles of Courage discusses Taft's position in great length.

Does it? Not have to look back at that. Yeah, I'd forgotten about that.

And Winston Churchill was opposed. He said it was a winner's court. And the week of the-- within a week, the last-- I think the last week in October of '46, when they were actually hung, The Economist ran an editorial that said, I wonder what would have happened-- I wonder what the Japanese would have said about Hiroshima, if they'd won.

Oh, I should get that.

What?

I should get that.

You should get that. I will tell you, you should get-- the last trip I made out of the country was to Tokyo. And I went in a plane, had driver, and escort to go to the Peace Museum. Have you been there?

Yes.

All right, then you know.

Yeah, I've been there. But Churchill was also opposed to Nuremberg?

My understanding, yes.

I'll have to check that. But you felt, even over time, I mean, on the other hand, you say it set a new standard.

Yeah, well I have ambivalences. I mean, do I still don't understand this? Do I think we're going to-- we may face some problems in-- yes, I do.

So you felt-- I mean, you knew those guys were going to die, were guilty. Now, there's no question about it. They were guilty.

Right.

And guilty of horrible things. You probably, at that point, didn't know the whole scale.

Yeah, you did.

But you knew. You had a pretty good idea already.

Oh, sure. I mean this is-- they were hung 18 months after we-- with the-- Ike had gone to Buchenwald or wherever he went. So the world knew. I don't have any question about knowing what they had done and knowing their guilt.

Yeah. So what was your reservation? Because most people I've talked to have been in that position, at that time, felt no qualms, given the monstrosity, the monstrous crimes that were involved. Just curious why you're reaction would be--

Well, I have great fears about Victor's courts. We're going to-- we may have one in Syria tomorrow. Who should we hang? The rebels who we're going to force to lose according to this morning's New York Times?

Yeah.

Did you read the Times story?

Yeah, I just glanced at it. didn't have time--

But basically, they were saying that Assad, in his radio interview or in Moscow or with Moscow radio or whatever, and he says, one of the conditions of removing these is to stop supporting the insurgents.

Yes. Right. Right.

So he bluffed us out of-- he bluffed us out of our position and is going to walk off winning without killing more people.

Yeah. Yeah.

And then he decides to try the insurgents?

Yeah.

We finally decided not to try-- no, we didn't execute Jefferson Davis.

Yeah. Yeah.

We didn't execute Robert E. Lee.

Yeah. But arguably, they were not responsible for those kinds of atrocities that the Nazi system was. There was nothing comparable.

Well, I can't-- I can only say what I can say. I'm aware of that. I'm also-- I'm very afraid of international courts.

In general.

In general. I am sure that, during Vietnam, any International Court would have tried Henry Kissinger.

Right.

I am not sure that, had the Iraq war ended differently, might try the President of the United States. I am not sure, you know-- I'm not sure you can-- I have serious-- one of the chief reasons that nation states exist, and you would-- if anybody would admit this-- is to maintain order.

Right.

And as long as there is a superseding order of human rights, which is fairly loosely defined, you may not think so. But I do. I'm not sure what rights-- you know,

On a lighter note, I was really caught. I found your reference to going to the Rockettes in Nuremberg during the trial.

Yeah.

Amazing. That is, the Rockettes were there at the time?

Yep. Wow.

Well, you know, entertaining the troops was a big deal. It still is, I guess.

Yeah, it still is.

I may have told in the book because it's one of the things that I remember about how great actresses are great actresses, that Marlene Dietrich was the biggest deal.

Yeah, sure.

You got thousands of soldiers out wherever she sang. And I remember-- I don't remember if she sang in some kind of open amphitheater, where you sat on your helmet. At any rate--

She [BOTH TALKING] right?

Yes. And she's wearing a long-- I think an-- I saw her. And she's wearing a long, slinky evening gown. And they-- she sings "Lili Marleen" and whatever else she sings. And then they keep screaming for the legs, the legs, the legs. And so she raises her skirt two inches, down one, two inches. And of course she gets the one leg, and her garter is the shoulder patch of the people she's singing for.

[LAUGHS]

You just can't imagine what that does.

Yeah, they must've gone crazy.

And then she puts the other leg, and the other's whatever unit is also there.

Yeah. That's great. That's great. That's a wonderful story.

I remember it. Look-- I remember it almost 70 years later. If we're going to go out to lunch, I got to go and put my shoes on.

Sure. Sure. Go ahead.

I'll be back in two minutes.

Absolutely. Absolutely.