REALTIME FILE

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
FIRST PERSON: CONVERSATIONS WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
FIRST PERSON BOB BEHR
MAY 30, 2018

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>> Sonia Booth: Good morning, and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Sonia Booth. I am the host of the museum's public program, *First Person.* We are in our 19th year of the *First Person* program. Our First Person today is Mr. Bob Behr, whom you shall meet shortly.

This 2018 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation, with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of twice-weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serve as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue through mid-August. The museum's website, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests.

Bob will share with us his "First Person" account of his experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Bob a few questions. He will remain on stage after the program if you have additional programs.

A recording of this program will be made available on the museum's YouTube page.

Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.

What you are about to hear from Bob is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with his introduction.

Bob Behr was born in Berlin, Germany on March 1, 1922. He was the only child of Alfred and Lily Behr. Here we see a photo of Bob walking the family dog.

This is a map of Europe with Germany indicated, and then we see a map of Germany with the city of Berlin circled.

The family took special pride in being patriotic German citizens. Here we see a photograph of Bob's father, Alfred Behr, in his WWI uniform.

This photograph shows Bob's mother and father at the beach in 1921 or 1922.

Life changed dramatically for Bob and all Jews in Germany when the Nazis took power in 1933. German Jews were discriminated against. During Kristallnacht in November of 1938, Bob's father was arrested and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. Shortly after this, his family was evicted from their apartment. This is a photograph of the eviction notice Bob's mother received.

In 1942, Bob was arrested because he was Jewish and sent to Czechoslovakia, which we see on this map. And for those in the audience, after the war it was changed to the Czech Republic.

He was interned with thousands of other Jews in Theresienstadt, also called Terezin. The arrow on this map of Czechoslovakia points to Theresienstadt.

Here we see a map of Theresienstadt.

Later in 1944, Bob was sent to a satellite camp in Wulkow, Germany, where he worked to rebuild the SS general headquarters destroyed by the Allies.

By 1945, the Soviet Army reached Thereseinstadt and Bob was liberated on May 5, 1945. This photo is of the Soviet army.

In 1947, Bob immigrated to the United States where he enlisted in the United States Army, hoping to be assigned to Berlin so he could care for his mother. He was placed in Germany and we close with this photo of Bob and his mother in Berlin.

Bob and his wife, Marie Therese, live in the Washington, D.C. area. After serving with the U.S. Army from 1947 to 1954, Bob worked here in Washington, DC, until he went to work for the US Air Force as an intelligence officer, stationed in Germany from 1954-1961. Bob continued his civilian career with the Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio until his retirement in 1988.

While employed with the Air Force, Bob earned his Master's degree in modern European history. During this time, Bob also became a college adjunct professor teaching European history with a special emphasis on World War II and the Holocaust. Bob has spoken in many settings about his Holocaust experience. He spoke in two locations in Germany in 2017, and spoke to over 1,200 people at the University of Mississippi.

In 2000, Bob and Marie Therese moved to Maryland, just outside of Washington, to be close to their daughter, Deborah. They have two daughters and four grandchildren.

Bob volunteers with the museum's Holocaust Survivor and Victims Resource Center, where he is frequently called upon to use his fluency in French and German. You will find him here on most Friday afternoons.

With that I would like to begin our program and we'll start the interview portion.

So Bob, I want to thank you so much for being our *First Person* guest today. I know that you have a lot to share with us and our audience so we'll get started right away with a few

questions.

You spent your childhood in Berlin before the war began. I want you to start with telling us about your childhood and what was life like in Germany before Hitler came to power.
>> Bob Behr: Well, thank you very much, first of all, for inviting me. I regret about my German accent which somehow doesn't want to go away and so you have to suffer through that for the next hour or so. I'm trying to make it interesting.

It was not very nice for me to chew you out before I even started but I have to. Let me give you an example why I'm unhappy with you. Ok? I am born in 1922. I had 13 years of Nazi leadership, Nazi torcher, Nazi everything else. So what are you going to leave out? I had a heck of a time sitting here giving you my life story and then saying, my God, I forgot half of it. What you are expecting me to do is to take 13 years of really bad times and cram them into 45 minutes. Now, you do that and then you'll see how difficult it is. So I beg you in advance to forgive me if I leave things out. There is no way in the world that I can take 13 years and clam them into 45 minutes.

So rather than wasting more time, let that be my introduction. Forgive me for leaving things out which you may have known about but I didn't mention.

So, who am I? I am a Jewish boy born in Berlin. My father was a volunteer in World War I who was also, after the war, became a medical doctor. So we started our life, as far as I remember, as a very average German family.

Now, you know and I know that I was born a Jewish boy. My mother was Jewish. My father was Jewish. So obviously I was Jewish. But remember the word "obviously" because I will tell you a story later on because to the Germans there was no such thing as obviously. So in any case, I was born a Jew.

We lived a very normal German life. Now, you and I know that I was a Jewish boy. My parents both were Jewish. But I want to be absolutely clear in the beginning that religion, religion is not, I repeat, not the main focus in my life. The focus of my parents, myself, the way I was raised was to be one thing, to be a good German. My parents, first of all they were German, secondly they were German, thirdly they were German, and then only fourthly religion comes through the door and say, yeah, but you also have a religion.

Religion in my family -- and I'm not very proud, being honest with you -- but religion was not a focal point. There are a lot of Jews, people who don't forgive us that. Because I was raised with the belief that our fatherland, Germany, was the most important thing. Everything in my household, as far back as I remember, if it was good, it was German. And if it was not so good, then it wasn't German. So you have a nationality problem which wraps around your education.
>> Sonia Booth: Now, Bob, you were 11 years old when Hitler was appointed chancellor. I'm curious. When did you first become aware of anti-semitism in Germany?
>> Bob Behr: That's a very interesting question. When did I find out that I was not normal according to the Germans? Let me throw some things in here. Hitler's hatred of the Jewish people in Germany was not based on religion alone. I want you to hammer this in your head and there were other items. And Hitler's idea, I will make that very brief because otherwise I'm going to get chewed out, the major -- Hitler's hatred of Jews was based not on religious. It was based on blood.

Let me explain that because that's very important for you to understand. Hitler's idea was that Jews had bad blood. Now, religion, of course, he didn't like Jews but you can change religion. You can walk on the street and say, father, I would like to become a Catholic and the

father would train you and teach you and you would become a good Catholic. So religion is gone. What was important and what you need to take back with you wherever you come from is the idea that Hitler believed Jews had bad blood. Now, you can't change blood. I mean, you cannot just go and say, doctor, change my blood; I want to have Christian blood in me.

Now, how did I become acquainted with the Holocaust? The Holocaust, to me, started rather early. I was 6, 7, 8 years old. I would like to see some hands. What was the means of mass communication in the 1920s? There were two of them. I'll give you one. One was newspapers. There was newspapers. That was a very big thing.

What's the second one, anybody?

How about radio? Would you think that radio was playing the same role as television plays today? My home where I live here in Maryland, my kids come to visit me and the television never goes off, even if they don't watch it. So the same communication was happening in the 1920s except it wasn't television, obviously, it was the radio.

And here's where the beginning of my persecution starts. I was much too young to understand. The radio was blaring most of the time. My dad was a devoted politician and believed that he needed to be informed about the happenings of the world, especially as far as Jews were concerned. So the radio kept playing even though he cut it off when he had a patient. But basically it ran. What came out of the radios voice was way above my head. I didn't understand it. But certain things clicked. And the certain things that clicked was that whatever the voice out of the loudspeaker talked about Jews was bad.

It was bad because the Jews, and that was verbalized to me, the Jews caused the loss of World War I. The Jews had caused the peace treaty which the Germans were forced to sign in 1919. So it was a steady stream of anti-Jewish call it literature, call it verbiage, it doesn't matter.

Obviously my father was interested in it. I got perturbed. I was 8, 9 years old and I knew that I was Jewish. I knew that I was not raised as a devoted Jew but I knew that I was Jewish. And the words that came out of the loudspeaker which later on I found was Munich, was telling me that I as a Jew am a bad person. I will not have the time but you go through the individual items. But let me just say that Jews were accused to having caused the loss of World War I. The loss of World War I, you need to come back for another day and we will talk about that one.

But right now, suffice it to say that the Germans had signed a treaty. And, of course, one of the guys who did the signing was a Jew -- in fact, there were two Jewish people. And all of this was emphasized by the radio over and over again. So I got perturbed. I didn't understand. What did I know what a Jewish conspiracy was? I had no idea. But what do you do when you don't know? You go to somebody who does know. In my case that was my mother.

My mother was a good German housewife. Believed in the tradition of Germany and her Jewish dependency was very minor. So I went to her one day. You know, I am now 96 years old. I can barely sit straight but I went to my mother and said, Mom, what is this what our dad is listening to? I hear nothing but bad words about Jewish people. We are Jews, aren't we? And my mother said, Yeah, we're Jewish but we don't make this a big issue. That didn't make any sense to me at all.

Then my mother, in her own nimble, friendly, polite, kind way tried to explain to me what democracy is, what freedom means, and what regime we are living under. And all of this began to make a little sense. The bottom line of my mother's lecture was you don't have to

worry about anything. We live in a democracy which Germany had become after Emperor Williams fled to Holland. I listened to my mother's words, said I don't have to worry about it. Why not? And then without going into any details with you, she explained in her own friendly way what a democracy is, that Germany had just become a democracy. It used to be an empire before. So I took this. If mother said don't worry about it, then that's exactly what I did. I didn't worry about it.

>> Sonia Booth: A lot of people thought it would blow over, had lived in Germany for generations. And your father served in World War I as a soldier.

So to shift us ahead a little bit. 1933 was when Hitler was appointed chancellor. November 9 and 10, 1938, was a big turning point when vicious attacks took place against Jews all over Germany. And not only were Jewish homes and businesses destroyed and vandalized but so were synagogues thousands of Jewish men were rounded up and arrested that night in what became known as Kristallnacht or Night of Broken Glass.

I know that in your testimony you've said that you saw a synagogue being burned nearby your home. Can you tell us about what you remember of Kristallnacht and your direct -- the direct impact on you?

>> Bob Behr: Well, to add to her lecture, I would like to add that the life of the Jewish people in Germany got worse and worse and worse. I could spend a whole morning with you just telling you how Jews were persecuted.

Let me give you one example. We lived in an apartment in Berlin, third floor, no elevator. So what's so special? My mother received a letter, which I still have, dated November 1938, which said in essence the Christian renters, its -- the people who rented an apartment in that particular building, no longer wish to be associated with Jews so therefore all Jews must leave the building; go anywhere you want but get out of our building because the Christian people.

Now, we have always paid our rent. We have always behaved well. We were always nice to everybody, and polite. But the Christian renters wanted us out. You know, picture yourself wherever you live, whatever you do, suddenly you get a letter telling you out, no matter. You lose your job, you lose your apartment, you need a place to live. You haven't done anything. You haven't hurt anybody, so forth.

So that gives you a picture of what life was for Jewish people. Was there a difference? Was there a judge? Was there police you could go to and say, help, they're kicking us out of our apartment? There wasn't anybody. The judicial system towards Germany. Heinrich Himmler, a defector you may remember, always said what is right and what is wrong is my determination. So there was no law books. There was no nothing. The Nazis created their own law.

So I grew up in an environment which is just opposite from what it is supposed to be. Now, I know that you as intelligent people read the newspapers, hear the news today. We got problems. We got problems. But in the 1920s, after the war was over, there was supposed to be a redeeming, the renewed Germany, and it wasn't. The 30th of January 1933 -- you're not going to get a test so don't worry about remembering the date. But on the 30th of January our very senile old president appointed Hitler as the chancellor of Germany.

Now, here is why I like you better than some other groups. They make me sometimes talk to eighth graders. The eighth graders sit there. And when I say Hitler became chancellor of Germany, you see that big question mark, What in the world is a chancellor? Ok? So we don't have to worry about that. We know. So it makes my life relatively easy.

Hitler became now the person in Germany which had the unrestricted power to do what he wanted to do. And from then on a transformation took place in Germany. The Germans who were intelligent, well-educated, likeable people suddenly turned anti-semitic, turned anti-Jewish. I could give you a dozen examples how that worked but it was the order from above was you cannot like a Jew; you must hate a Jew.

Now, can anybody tell you, this audience, say you must like him or her? You don't. This is not the way a democracy works. So Berlin changed completely.

>> Sonia Booth: And so laws continued to restrict Jews. And then in 1938, can you give us some impressions of what happened November 9 and 10, 1938?

>> Bob Behr: It became more and more drastic and culminated in something you will shake your heads, had nothing to do with anything you've been hearing in the last 10 minutes. It had something to do with somebody in Paris.

Now, let me explain that very quickly. There was a Jewish boy in Paris, France, he killed -- for a lot of reasons, big books written -- he killed a German Embassy official. The Germans in Germany used that killing of the German Embassy employee as a reason to go into what came into the history books known as Kristallnacht. Why? Because the Nazis went through two days of looting and destroying. You have no idea what Berlin looked like. Berlin was economically very much associated with Jewish people. They had stores and everything. The windows were smashed. The Jews were persecuted. They burned the synagogues, no matter how old a synagogue was, how valuable the synagogue was, it had to be destroyed and it was destroyed. We lived not very far from one of the better situated synagogues and it was burned completely. The Nazis took the holy script of the Jewish people, the Torah, threw it on the floor and made the Germans walk across.

Now, were there Germans that said I'm not going to do this? No, there weren't because the punishment for disobeying was so severe, concentration camps, that 99.9% of all the Germans obeyed those Nazis commands.

In addition to destroying the synagogues, in addition to maligning the Jewish life, they also arrested 30,000 Jews, eeny, meeny, miny, moe. Among them, my father. I haven't told you and I will now. My parents had been divorced. So my father did not live with us. He was one of the 30,000 Jewish people who was arrested at night and put into a concentration camp.

Now, I'm not going to go into a lecture about treatment in the concentration camp but believe me it was tough. Very few survived.

Well, so my father came to the Buchenwald concentration camp, was arrested, and the Nazis told them there's only one way to get out, from the concentration camp, on a ship to another country. Or maybe even a railroad in those days. But it was to leave -- to survive this ordeal you must get out of Germany, period.

So I'm going to cut across. My father was one of them. He had to get out. It was a large degree of luck which unfortunately I don't have time. He managed to get out of Germany in 1939 and went to Cuba.

>> Sonia Booth: Meanwhile, post Kristallnacht, you continued living in Berlin with your mother --

>> Bob Behr: My parents were divorced by that time.

>> Sonia Booth: And until 1942, June of 1942, when you and your family were arrested. Can you tell us about -- how did they find you? How were you arrested?

>> Bob Behr: How I was arrested was very simple. They rang the doorbell. They came up.

Their leather coats and said do come with us. That was the method. The reason behind everything was we could not escape from the German persecution. The reason we were arrested wasn't even -- you may chuckle now, may not believe -- the reason we were arrested had nothing to do with religion. What happened is that the Germans in the 1930s had passed a law that said if you help somebody to escape from Germany while it is under Nazi regime, you will be punished.

Well, bottom line, my mother, of course, kind as she was helped somebody escape to Switzerland. Switzerland, as you well know, was a country which was a democratic country. So the Gestapo found out about that and, wouldn't you know, they came the next two days and my entire family was arrested: my stepfather, my mother, and myself.

Now a new chapter. We had to leave our home. We had to leave -- one of the sad incidences of that story is something -- when I was 6 months old, my mother hired a nanny. Now, you all know what a nanny is. The nanny, for many reasons I don't want to go into, raised me. She was a substitute mother. She was the one who took care of me. It was something -- a woman I loved dearly; if anything, maybe more than my own mother because she was so close to me.

The fact was that in 1934, the Nazis had passed a law that no Christian lady could work as a maid or in any capacity, work in a household where there was a Jewish kid, male, Jewish kid, older than 15 years old, which happened to be me. I was older. My nanny, whom I loved dearly, had to go. Out. She went to Hamburg. But that's not the end.

So life began to get terrible. I lost the nanny. The income was bad. My father was not allowed to treat patients who were under security. If you had a patient who was not able to pay his fee, then he couldn't -- he shouldn't treat him. But there was no such thing. Jews were not allowed to be participants in the Social Security system which existed in Germany. So I think you can understand that the screws were getting tighter and tighter.

>> Sonia Booth: And culminating -- I mean, the arrest in 1942, can you tell us about how you then went to Theresienstadt?

>> Bob Behr: How I got to Theresienstadt, which was a concentration camp in a non-existing country anymore, Czechoslovakia, is now called the Czech Republic, when the Germans lost the war, the country of Austria lost it, too, because they were allies. So bottom line, the war was lost by all friendly countries. Didn't feel there were lots of revolutions. Very difficult times right after the war. But Germany recuperated by 1970 -- by 1926, 1927. Germany was getting better economically, socially, and so forth.

What was your question?

>> Sonia Booth: Could you tell us what was life like at Theresienstadt?

>> Bob Behr: Well, in Theresienstadt is very interesting. I know you don't give me too much time but here's the reason. The Germans had lost the war and the Germans struggled to rebuild their country. It was a difficult time. But the Nazi Party became the party with the most votes. People in the 1920s were able to vote just like you are going to vote in November election. So they were voted. And the Nazi Party became the strongest party. And I already told you that Hitler became the chancellor of Germany.

>> Sonia Booth: And they were able to take over Czechoslovakia or part of it. So that was part of the territory.

>> Bob Behr: The Germans, first country they occupied was Austria. Austria vanished from the map. The next country they occupied was Czechoslovakia which vanished from the map. So as you can see -- my mother's famous words "Don't worry about it," "You have nothing to

worry." "We live in a democracy" was getting narrower and narrower because the Nazis just took over and took away whatever they wanted.

So my mother knew a woman who came to her and asked her, "Lily" -- which was my mother's first name -- "How do I get out of Germany?," "I don't have a family. I don't have children. I don't have anybody. I'm all alone." And it so happened that my mother knew of a Catholic priest who lived and worked near the Swiss border. She said, "I'm going to give you his name and address. If you can persuade him, he can practically walk with you from Germany into Switzerland and you would be free."

So to make a long story short, that's exactly what happened. Then the lady who got into Switzerland, it was July -- one day in July. The woman sits down with a cup of coffee, which was available in Switzerland, and guess what. She writes a postcard. Now, talk about stupidity. She writes a postcard and says, "Lily, guess where I am. I'm sitting in Switzerland and having a good cup of coffee and enjoying life." And then she adds a sentence saying "If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be here."

Now, think for a minute. If you get the postcard which says "If it hadn't been for you" being in a country where the death penalty was a problem because the Nazis -- if you flee Germany to another country, you will be killed.

>> Sonia Booth: And the Nazis were monitoring the mail so they saw --

>> Bob Behr: There was censorship.

>> Sonia Booth: And that really led the arrest of your whole family, her words on that postcard. Can you tell us when you got to Theresienstadt what your first job was? You were forced to build a railroad?

>> Bob Behr: Theresienstadt was a little village which was a former Czechoslovakian Garrison town. And for one reason or another it was not attached to the railroad network to bring the merchandise or whatever was needed to them. So the Jews who were collected -- German Jews, Czech Jews, Polish Jews, all the Jews were forced into forced labor. That means -- called slave -- there's a difference between forced labor and slave labor. Forced labor you stay at home, go to work in the morning, go back home at night. Slave labor is you're in a concentration camp and your freedom's gone. The only blue sky you see is the one above. And that's where we were.

We got to this concentration camp which the Germans had turned over to the Jewish community and said here is your city; you can do what you want as long as you accommodate all the people we are sending you. To make a long story short, the people they sent was enormous. Theresienstadt, during the Czech government, had about 4,000 inhabitants, 4,000 civilians lived in the city. By the time I'm talking now --

>> Sonia Booth: 1942.

>> Bob Behr: 1942, they had 60,000.

Now, I want to ask you a question. How many of you like sometimes to be alone and have a private lifer with yourself? See your hands?

All right. Everybody likes privacy. Under the Nazi regime in Theresienstadt there was no privacy. There were 60,000 Jewish people crammed into a place where there used to be 4,000. I don't need to tell you what the difference was. It was terrible. It was terrible.

>> Sonia Booth: You had said that hunger was a big problem. And you'd also said the longer you lived in the camp, the further away went the word hope. Could you speak to that? That hope was lost the longer you remained.

>> Bob Behr: Well, what she's saying of course is right. The longer the war lasted, the more

the Germans won, the smaller the hope for the Jewish people to get liberated. And when the Germans realized that 60,000 people in a space of 4,000 people is a little bit too crowded, they started something which you are familiar with and that is the cremation and the killing of the Jews.

There's a very, very good YouTube story about that if you're ever interested to hear the details how cold-blooded the Germans decided there is only one solution to the Jewish problem, kill them. And that's when the gas chambers started, when all the atrocities, the six million Jews who were killed by the Germans started at that time; when the Germans realized that they had to do something to clean out this concentration camp to make some room for new Jews.

>> Sonia Booth: To protect your parents from deportation where you knew that they would have been killed, in 1944, you volunteered to work on a new SS headquarters.

>> Bob Behr: Well, some background. The war, of course, between Germany and Italy and so forth went on. The war went on. And among the things that happened during that war, Germany practically got bombed to pieces. If you ever find some old news reels you will see what Germany looked like. It was completely destroyed.

Why am I telling you this? Because one of the buildings that was [Indiscernible] No. 8. You don't have to remember that. I'm just telling you what was so special about that building. It was the headquarters of the Gestapo, of the SS, and that was the focal point for all the unhappiness which started to really grow at this point in time.

Now, in the meantime, the American and the British Air Forces kept bombing Germany. The reason I'm mentioning it is because one of the buildings they destroyed with the bombs was the headquarters of the SS. That's where all the misery started. That building was completely destroyed. And the four-star general who headed that thing went to the Germans and said, I need to have a new headquarters. The Americans or the British destroyed my head headquarters. I've got too much administrative work not to have it.

Well, it was that time where the Germans were building other things. They listened to that general and said, ok, we'll give you a piece of land. We'll give you a piece of land and you can build your own new headquarters. Then and they needed workers to build the headquarters. They needed workers.

>> Bob Behr: Yeah. And then they said anybody who was slated -- volunteers to go there, we will not kill -- eliminate is what they called it -- we will not eliminate. We will save your relatives. So yours truly thought that's my chance to save my mother and my stepfather. I said I volunteer.

I want to cut through some of the administrative stuff. We were shipped to the east near the Polish border and to build that new headquarters. That, ladies and gentlemen, was the worst time in all of those 12 years before. That was a time where for the first time I thought about dying. I had always believed I would not give the Nazis, the Germans, the satisfaction to have killed me. I wanted to survive for one reason, to talk to people like you, to explain what happened. I did not want to live anymore. I had enough. I said 12 years is enough. If I'm supposed to die, let me die now.

But the good Lord has his own little ideas. He did that very cleverly. Here's the end of my story. On a Sunday afternoon in November, bitter cold in November, no good clothing. I was standing with another fellow prisoner at the outside of the barbed wire fence. When I say outside, we were inside the camp. And that is what I meant. All of a sudden I saw, together with that other fellow, a huge track of German people going passed the concentration camp on

the outside. They were free. They had any means of transportation. They used bicycles, carts, you name it.

I looked at these people. They looked terrible. They looked hungry. They looked dirty. They looked miserable. And I asked my concentration camp colleague who are these people. And he said, "Well, those are Germans." I said, "Germans? Germans don't go like this." And he explained to me in very simple terms that the Russians who had turned the war around after the Battle of Stalingrad had now finally succeeded in defeating the Germans. And what you saw out there, what I saw out there, was the Germans fleeing from the Russians because the Russians had occupied -- were occupied by the Germans since 1941 so now they were getting even. They were chasing the Germans.

>> Sonia Booth: So you saw them retreating. And that was a big moment because --

>> Bob Behr: Well, yeah. But see, now it began to dawn on me. If the Germans are already fleeing from the Russians, then the Russians can't be that far away. It changed my mind. From a person who not long ago thought I would like to die, I don't want anything, death would be a relief for me, all of a sudden I hear the story that our biggest allies, the Russians in those days, were coming closer and closer. I said, well, maybe, Bob Behr, you got something going up here. Maybe you shouldn't die. Maybe you should live.

To make a long story short, it changed my mind. I determined -- I said, Lord, give me the power and the intelligence and the ability to stay alive. Why did I want to stay alive? Well, believe me, it sounds corny, but to talk to people like you. I didn't want the world to forget what was going on all of these 13 years where the world, including America, which is another story, would not help the German Jewish people. All I thought maybe somebody ought to stay alive and tell them what really happened.

>> Sonia Booth: There's so much more that we could share today. But we're getting close on the end of our time. I wanted to mention that in 1945, the Soviets liberated Theresienstadt and then -- again, there's so much more we could share. Bob will remain on stage at the end of the program so you can come up and feel free to ask questions. We won't have time for Q&A right now but you can feel free to come up.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that we have our First Person speaker say the last word. Before we do that, though, I will let you know that we have *First Person* programs each Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. So we encourage you to come back to the future programs. This program, the recording of it, will be posted to our website.

At the end of the program, our photographer, Joel, will come up on stage. We're going to take a photo of Bob with you as the backdrop. So we ask you to remain in your seats for that.

And with that, I'd like to turn back to you, Bob to give us our last words.

>> Bob Behr: Well, last words, short and to the point. Number one, I'm deeply grateful that you took the time to come and listen to my lecture. There's a lot of things going on in the city of Washington, D.C. which you could have done but you took the time to come and listen to a Holocaust survivor.

I am now 96 years old. I don't know how long I will be living. I don't know how much longer the good Lord will say you stay there. But the reason I'm sitting here at that age where I could have stayed home with my wife is you.

Ladies and gentlemen, as sad as that may sound, we will not be around much longer. Life being what it is, I will be dead. If I could live a few more years, I would be extremely grateful but there's no guarantee. So who is going to be the one who tells the world

about the Nazi atrocities, about the six million Jews who were killed? Who is going to be there? Well, you will be there. You are my motivation. I'm sitting here as miserable as I feel today, I could have stayed in bed, but I came as I wanted to talk to you to tell you personally I need your help. We need your help. You are the ones who are living. You are the ones who are strong enough to survive this.

Now, we are going today through some pretty wild political times but through this lecture, my lecture, you will hear that things could be a lot worse, could be a lot worse. You may think that our current president has his problems. Yes, he does. But so did your parents, your grandparents.

There is a revolving type door where it is important that people like you are informed, understand, and do something. If you see something happen whether it's atrocity, be accident, or any other problem, don't go away and say that's not my problem. I'm on my way to so-and-so, invited for dinner, don't have time to worry about it, don't do that. Stop for a second and say, Is there something I can do to help? Maybe there is not very much. Maybe you just have to make a telephone call and say send us an ambulance. There is always something that can be done.

And this is a motivation which I was hoping to install in you, that you feel an obligation to human kind, to do whatever you can to help people, to liberate people, to do something good for people. That's what my message is to you. I know you can do it. I don't know if you will do it. But I'm asking you as an old and pretty much dying man, do that in the interest -- for the people who were killed by the Nazis for no other reason than their blood.

I really appreciate your help. Go home. Enjoy the day. Enjoy the holiday. But remember, I have an obligation. I have an obligation to do, if I can, anything to help other people. Take this as your message and you will see that somehow the Lord will award you for that.

>> Sonia Booth: Thank you, Bob. Thank you.

>> [Applause]