

Fred Taucher

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Question: It's just to get your name, first and last and middle and the correct spelling of it.

Answer: Okay. My name is Fred Taucher, T-A-U-C-H-E-R.

Question: Where, I got disoriented from the last interview that we had. Where were you born?

Answer: I was born in Berlin, Germany, January 29, 1933 and that is a day before Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.

Question: Wow. I mean, there's some irony there I guess, and born into a Jewish family?

Answer: I was born into a Jewish family, and my Father was born in 1891 in New York.

Question: Oh really, and migrated, emigrated back to?

Answer: With his parents, he. I don't know the full story, of course, I was too young at that time but he went back to Germany with his family. Now in the last two years, I've done a lot of research and I learned that my Father was married before and divorced, but his Mother was born in the UK.

Question: Oh wow.

Answer: And, my Father, when of course, he was, I was born in 1933. My brother in 1932, so he was quite old when he actually had us, and my Mother was only three years younger than my Father. And my Mother, too, was married before.

Question: Huh, so had any of your Father's family been from Germany or why did he..?

Answer: That I do not know; I have no idea. I've been trying to research it, but I do know the family on my Mother's side were from Eastern Germany, which is now Poland. For instance, my Mother was from (Bytom?), Ober Schlesien, and my Father too lived in that area which would have been Breslau that was Germany, now it is Wroclaw In fact now, providing there's no war, I will be going to Germany in May and also, visit Wroclaw to kind of now look more into my family on my Mother's side.

Question: What did your Dad do?

Answer: My Dad was a tailor. He had a tailor shop in Berlin. And speaking of that in 1938 when I was not quite six years old, November 9, when Kristallnacht occurred, and I remember that like it was yesterday, when the windows were shattered and the Nazis destroyed my Father's store, removed his inventory, destroyed his sewing machines, his tools of the trade... and I remember that like it was yesterday. Now the unique thing was back in 1938 the Germans arrested most Jewish storeowners but they did not arrest my Father. And I heard him discuss that with my Mother too, many times and with friends. The reason he was not arrested he thought because they considered him an American Jew, because they knew he was born in the U.S. and they left him alone. And of course because of that I think my Father never made any attempts to leave Germany, he figured they'd leave him

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alone. They made him work as a slave laborer on the railroad after they took the store away from him, but he did remain and he was not arrested until late 1943, so one of the last people that was arrested from the railroad where he worked and shipped to Auschwitz. And apparently, from the information I've gathered that he was murdered two days after he arrived in Auschwitz. The Germans kept fantastic records, even though some of the dates were wrong.

Question: But they still documented..

Answer: They documented everything, yes.

Question: When they took your Father's shop, was that a very organized sweeping of the streets by the Nazis to take these shops or was it just chaos?

Answer: Chaos, I would.. now I would consider them they were a bunch of hoodlums and they just it's just like when we've had demonstrations here and I'm thinking of the World Trade Fair that we had here back three years ago and I was an interpreter. I did interpreting in German and Japanese to the people that were here, and I was right amongst the demonstrators. At first they were peaceful but then a group came and they started destroying property. Unfortunately, the police didn't do anything. And this is exactly what I remembered; I mean it brought my time back when I was a kid in Berlin.

Question: Did you, was the type of set up where your Father had a shop downstairs and lived upstairs?

Answer: No, it was a one-story unit. It was part of a building and my Father had the storefront and we had one-bedroom living quarters in the place and of course they took that away from him and we. I don't know, again, I was too young then but I know we had only a short time to move out and again, the Germans then had some apartment houses in, not one of the better districts of Berlin, where all the Jews had to stay. And we had a one-bedroom; that's all we had, a one-bedroom. And I think we had to share the bathrooms and kitchens and so forth, with other tenants on that floor.

Question: So how old were you when they took the shop?

Answer: I was, well, probably I was just barely six years old. I think it was either December or January of 1938-39, and I was born in January '33.

Question: That had to scare the hell out of a little kid.

Answer: Oh yes. Oh yes, it sure did. Yeah. And I still remember my Mother just being up in arms and she says, What are we going to do? And I remember when they destroyed his inventory and everything, my Father saying; Well that's what we have insurance for. But, of course, even today I have never... not seen a penny yet of insurance money, and that's one of the things I am Chairman of the Survivors of the Holocaust asset recovery project. And I work very close then with the Insurance Commissioner of Washington State Deborah Senn, and we did pass a law here in the State of Washington that the German owned insurance companies that are operating in the State of Washington publicize the names and policy holders. But, that hasn't been done yet.

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Question: So these are companies that are still in existence.

Answer: Right, well a good example is Generali. It's an insurance company from Italy. But they own a number of insurance companies right here. I could be wrong on the name but I believe Unigard Insurance is owned by Aliance, the second largest insurance company in the world.

Question: So did they, and again you're were pretty young, but did they just take and throw everything out the windows and in the streets or what did they...

Answer: They, for instance, the sewing machines, they just threw and destroyed it. The clothing, even unfinished suits, my Father was both a ladies and men's tailor, he made ladies' dresses and they just tore those into pieces. The material, the array of material just for sewing, I think they loaded up. I don't really know what happened there. Again, I was so scared I was in the back of the room but they just emptied out his store, the storefront.

Question: Were these SS soldiers or were they common soldiers or..

Answer: That I wished remember. I think they were mostly Hitler Youth or the real young SS or the SA, the yellow shirts, and but I can't give you the specific details. Again, I was not quite six years old.

Question: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember... did it, did it 'cause you talked about your Dad that's what we have insurance for.

Answer: Right.

Question: So your Dad it sounds like turned the other cheek, have a positive look or did it break his spirit?

Answer: Again, he said that after the Germans left, you see. And he was at that time when he told my Mother that don't worry we have insurance. I think it was to calm her down and but he was also convinced the insurance companies would pay for the damage. Of course that never happened.

Question: Now you were a pretty young child but do you think that was your first experience with discrimination?

Answer: That I can remember. I know there were others. I know we were spit upon. I say we, my brother and I, but that's the first real heavy experience that I can remember. I may also add my brother's a year older, but he can hardly remember anything. In fact, he cannot even speak German to carry on a conversation.

Question: Now it's interesting. I overheard you a little bit saying that when you came to the states, you didn't speak German for a long time.

Answer: That's right. I did not want to speak German. I just had such a hate towards Germany and a horrible prejudice. Anything German I wanted nothing to do with, and I changed my mind back. I think it must have been 1970 or 1971 when I computerized the Jewish Community Center on Mercer Island which is for Greater Seattle, and while I was working there going through records that had to be

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computerized I had then an old lady start speaking German with me.. and I turned around, I said I don't like to speak that language. And she rolled up her sleeve and showed me her numbers that were tattooed on her arm from Auschwitz, and she put her hand on my shoulder and she said "Son, why do you punish a language when it were the people that were to blame?" And it made so much sense that I started speaking German again.

Question: Wow... So do you consider yourself a German then?

Answer: No, I consider myself an American... 100% American. In fact, even when we were child, five years old, our Father always said, some day we'll go to America. That's our country, even though I was born in Berlin. And, again I volunteered, after I got out of high school, in 1951, I volunteered for the U.S. Army. I wasn't even a citizen, but I was shipped to Korea. I kept a record of casualties during the Korean War on IBM equipment and of course I've been in that business ever since.

Question: So your Dad, even way back then, viewed himself as an American.

Answer: Yes he did.

Question: That's why, we...as Adolph was saying, we spoke with a gentleman yesterday, Mr. Zweig that was at Auschwitz and I said it was so surreal to hear him say and then we were set free. But, he was set free in his own country, which was weird. I mean, when, when he got let out and when they got liberated from Auschwitz, it was his own country. I mean we did the same thing to the Japanese-Americans here, but to think, you were, how could you be set free back to your own country?

Answer: I can tell you something if I may here. When I was born in 1933 it was common to be, have your birth by midwife. And the reason again that now I know the story, at the time of course I didn't. But in 1933 Hitler passed his very first ordinance, actually I think it was passed before he really came to power already; but that all doctors and hospitals that treat Jews will not be reimbursed by the country, by the state. And so Jews really couldn't.. if they went to a hospital, they wouldn't be serviced unless it was a Jewish hospital. There weren't any that I know of. And so, most of the Jewish families that needed help for birth hired midwives. Well, this midwife to my birth, it so happened was a very close friend of Hitler and a high-ranking Nazi member even back in the '30's. Yet, somehow she befriended my family and when my Father was arrested, she advised us that our Father has been arrested, that we have to go in hiding. She had a summer cabin in the outskirts of Berlin where only high ranking Nazi member could have property there, and she hid us there for about eight months and we were right in the amongst the SS or high ranking military officers, members of the Nazi Party that were on rest and recuperation, so to speak. And from 1943, when we went into hiding till the winter of 1943 we stayed right there; she got us false ID. She got us ration cards so we could buy groceries. And the reason I brought this up, you mention about after the war. I was caught at the tail end of the war and shipped to Dachau but I never was inside the camp. I escaped in a rail car, but anyhow I met up after my escape from Dachau, met up with my Mother and brother again. Incidentally, our Mother was shot by the Germans a day before the Russians invaded Berlin. They found her out. And, anyhow, after the war when Berlin was divided into the various sections, my brother and I visited an Army camp in Berlin and that's a long story. Anyhow we

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befriended, it so happened, a Jewish-American soldier, who helped us get a Visa to come to the U.S. And in 1946, in September, 1946, before we left for the U.S., she was real upset with us, this midwife, she says you are Germans; you can't go to America, they were our enemies. She was still a Nazi and she was a Nazi until the day she died. When we came here we wrote letters to her; she would never answer. She remained a Nazi till the day she died which was probably 25 or 30 years ago.

Question: Why do you think that she protected you then?

Answer: I think the only reason she befriended my family and she gave life to me; she was the midwife to my birth, and I think that's the only reason. I have no other idea why she did that. And also I know my Mother asked her well aren't you afraid. She says, well if they would arrest me, we won't tell anybody that I'm helping you; but if I do get arrested, Hitler will free me. And I remember my Mother even telling her, well then, why don't you call him up now? Because she was also such a fanatic, she was convinced Hitler didn't know what was being done. That's what a fanatic she was. And she, my Mother asked her, why don't you call up Hitler. She says I've called him many time but he's so busy with the war effort that he just hasn't had time to call me back.

Question: So she believed that Hitler didn't know about what was happening in Auschwitz and Dachau.

Answer: That's right, that's right.

Question: Cause I've heard the other extreme. I've heard people say well the people of the village didn't know what was going on.

Answer: No, I'll go right back when I was arrested. Incidentally, the German archives are saying that I was arrested April 15 but I couldn't have been because I was probably on the last train, the cattle car, to Dachau but I think it must have been March because in April, I'm sure, the trains were not running to Dachau which is 30 minutes drive from Munich and the Allies were already there and I think some other areas, the British were in there. So, it had to have been March when I was arrested, but when I was arrested they. First of all, I didn't have my ID, like this midwife gave us ID but I didn't have the ID that I belonged to the Hitler Youth. And, also kids were supposed to be ten years old and older, in Hitler Youth uniform. I didn't have Hitler Youth uniform. Of course there I stood out, even I looked more like I was about seven or eight years old. And, anyhow they wanted my ID. I Showed ID... Why aren't you in Hitler Youth uniform and where's your Hitler Youth ID? I said I don't have it with me and the uniforms are being washed. And what did they do, within the streetcar full of people and they made me drop my pants. And that is because in Germany only Jews are circumcised and that's why many a man or boy was caught in Germany because of circumcision. And they just threw me out of the train, out of the streetcar, and they didn't hide it from anyone. And here I was a twelve-year-old boy and they threw me into a truck.. and I mean literally threw me... I had bruises. And then they took me to the SS Headquarters where I was not treated too gently for two days... nothing to eat or drink. And then, again, threw me on one of those cattle cars, which the cattle car I was on were mostly POW's, Russians, that were caught on the outskirts of Berlin, I guess. And I was in with mostly with them; there were a few other kids, not many, and women; and then it took, again, I'm guessing there and also having looked at some of the archives it looks like I was on that train for two days. Nothing to eat, no sanitation facilities,

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nothing to drink. And I do know the people that fell on the floor because of no sleep and too weak, they would never get up again; they'd be trampled to death. And I will thank the Russian soldier that kept me from falling down; they kept me standing up in the wait. Any anyhow it was during an air raid that somebody opened up the door to the rail car that I was in, and the Russian soldiers that were strong enough jumped out and I followed them. And they came upon a place, again, I don't know where. I visited Munich; I visited Dachau and I tried to backtrack where that could have been and I could not find it from the rail yard there. But there were a bunch of, a few German soldiers training Hitler Youth kids how to shoot a rifle; and the Russians, of course, didn't have any arms but they were able to overpower the few German soldiers that were there, even though over half were killed themselves. And then they killed every one of the Hitler Youth kids and shot 'em all. And then they put on, the Russian soldiers put on uniforms that fit them from the German soldiers; and they went into the woods there but would not let me follow them. And here I was all by myself amongst dead soldiers and dead Hitler Youth kids; some of them were my size so I decided, well if they put on the Army uniforms I can put on the Hitler Youth uniform. And so I undressed one of the kids that was my size and put on his uniform and I walked to the highway, that time known as the Autobahn and I flagged down a car. Well it happened to be a car with two SS officers. Of course, remember now, German was the only language I knew. I was like a German. And I guess I was blessed, I don't look Jewish or I didn't look and I flagged 'em down. I said I was here for training but some Russians came by and they looked like they were prisoners and they killed every one of them. And I said I'm the only one that came alive, that came out alive and my Mother's in Berlin. I want to go back to Berlin; how can I do it? And they opened up the back door and said to come in; we're heading for Berlin. So here I got a ride with two SS officers, ride to Berlin and they went, there were roadblocks all along; and they had a little sticker on their windshield and they were not even asked, they were just waived right through the roadblocks. And my brother, my Mother and I when we lived under false names, and at that time already we remained at a subway station in Berlin because there was day and night bombing and we didn't really have a place to go. And together with thousands of others, Germans, we remained down in the subway station because it was safe from artillery fire and so forth. And I met up with my Mother and brother again. And of course the first thing I did is.. I, we had spare clothing, and I removed the Hitler Youth uniform because I did not...Otherwise they would have made me go upstairs and given me a rifle. So even though, like I say I was a twelve year old kid that looked more like eight years old. But anyhow while the fighting was going on in Berlin, my Mother went upstairs from the subway station to get water out of the fire hydrant.. which the people did, and she didn't come back. And it was just recently, probably less than a year ago, that my brother actually received the death certificate of our Mother from the German government and it said she was shot at Prinz Albert Strasse. Well Prinz Albert Strasse were the SS Headquarters, so apparently our Mother was caught getting water from the water well, they hauled her off to the SS Headquarters which probably was only a ten or fifteen minute drive, and shot her over there or maybe she tried to escape. I do not know. But it was the first time that we knew of.. before we just had her as missing. And we thought possibly that the Russians when they invaded Berlin they took many of the Russian (German) women and kids and hauled 'em off to Russia. And we thought this is probably what happened to our Mother because even when the Russian occupation was still in Berlin before the Allies came in to Berlin they loaded my brother and I onto trucks many times wanting to ship us off to Moscow. But it was very easy; they didn't guard anyone. As soon as the truck slowed down or stopped, we'd jump off. Because again, our main goal was to come to America.

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Question: Do you remember if you were in a constant state of fear or does your mind get in a different place?

Answer: Different, at first we were in a constant fear. But after while it just got so that well if you get caught, you get caught. And again, like I said, none of us ever traveled together. Sometimes my Mother went to get ration cards from the midwife. You see, she would not go out there. And, or my brother would go or I would go and even though we were young we knew Berlin like a book. We were very familiar with Berlin and I'm getting that way again. I've been going back to Berlin for the last five years to do research. That's why... I'm beginning to put a puzzle together.

Question: And that's what it is, is a big..

Answer: It is and they want, a good example is when I went there four years ago I went from one office to another in Berlin trying to get information, archives on my family before and during the war. And I was sent from one end of Berlin to another, always to a different office and here it was on a Thursday afternoon we were ready to leave on a Saturday and I had just been sent into East Berlin, even though it's one Berlin now but the eastern part of Berlin, and they told me I had to go to that street.. which was only a block from the hotel I stayed at. And I got to that place and I go up that office.. and I speak in English first and right away the girl, the receptionist, didn't know English so I spoke in German. And I said I was born here and I'm trying to get some information on my time in Germany, and I was told that you have it here. She says, Oh no you have to go to that office. Again, another part of Berlin.. and I lied there, I said I just came from there and they said you have it here. I was really getting upset. And she says, Well I can't help you. I said well then let me speak to your supervisor. Well, they're all busy. I said, well then I'll wait until somebody is free. I'm not going to leave here, until I get some information and I raised my voice a little bit. And then a door opened and a young lady came out and she spoke in German, can I help you. I said yes, I'm from the U.S.A. and she interrupts me. She says, Oh you are; and she speaks good English to me. And I said Yes and she says, Where are you from? Well, I'm from Seattle I told her. She says you've got to be kidding. I love Seattle... I love Pike Place Market. And come to find out she was a Ph.D. holder; and most government people in Germany also in private industry that have management type of jobs, have either, they have a degree, Ph.D., or they have this diploma degree. And she was a Ph.D. and was for six months here in Seattle attending the UW for some type of training, and so we hit it off. Anyhow she says, well you have to go to Potsdam, which is again.. it's a good hour by train out of Berlin. And she says now you won't find the place and it's too late for you to go today. You go tomorrow and here's how to get there. You take the train to Potsdam; once you get off the train you walk across two aisles and you take Bus No., I've forgotten now.

(Tel. Rings... This is both a Palm Pilot and a telephone)

So anyhow she told me then the bus and how many bus stops and where to get off. And she told me everything and once you get off, you'll see it; it's a botanical garden there, beautiful landscape. Anyhow she says don't go in the building, as you go up the stairway you'll see a beautiful building. Don't go in there; that's the main office of the botanical garden. You take to the right, go about 150 feet and you will see a building on your right that's like a warehouse... and that's where you have to go. So sure enough I got there the next day and there were some people working there landscaping so I asked a few people in German where the archive center... Never

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heard of it, never heard of it. So anyhow then I walk to this building, sure enough there is that warehouse, and I open it up and a lady greets me. Are you Herr Taucher, my name in German is pronounced Tal-ker, and I said Yes. She says, well, here's the information that you were looking for. They gave me complete computer printouts. And also, I was requested by a friend of mine, also living here in Seattle, who also came from Berlin, if I could get information for him. But I didn't tell that to this lady in Berlin and then I ask can you also give me some information on this gentlemen. She says well, just a minute, we'll get to the computer. And she gave me much bigger printout than what I had for me. But anyhow that printout that she gave me showed exactly the date, even the transport number, that our Father was arrested and was shipped to Auschwitz. It did have the wrong birthday of my Father but it had in New York... they had all the information and that we lived illegally from 1941, well that's when we were supposed to have been arrested. Of course, we weren't going into hiding until my Father was arrested in '43, but I think maybe this midwife had something to do why my Father wasn't arrested earlier. But they showed us living illegally from 1941 and then it showed that I was arrested April 15, like I said earlier that should have been March 15, I think, and that I turned up missing on April 19 or 20, which again should have been March. And then they had where we lived after the war and emigrated in September; they even had the date that we left Germany which was September 7, 1946. They had all that information, but anyhow they said when we left then, when I left that Archival Center, they said there's more information but they had to go to other archives. They had to gather that information and they will mail it to me and also for this other gentleman. And about two months later I get a form letter from that Archival Center and it said that sorry we have checked our archives and there's no information on you or your family. Now I sent an email to this lady that got me that information, the email address bounced, so I called up on my phone. Actually made a phone call and nobody ever heard of her. And two years ago when I went back I could not find out if she's working for the state or what happened, or if they fired her, I have no idea. Now I ran out of time but I'm going back in May and I'm going to try and visit that Archival Center again and see what they'll print out for me this time or if they are erasing the information. I do not know.

Question: Wow... What

Answer: And incidentally the same thing is true on this friend of mine. They gave me, must have given me twenty sheets on his Father, his parents, because his Father was a M.D.; and they had records from his medical practice and I brought back a whole bunch of it and now they say there's no records available. He got a very similar letter.

Question: Wow, so it didn't end, I mean what was happening is not, not..

Answer: No.... No.

Question: Now your Father was arrested, were you with your Father when he was arrested?

Answer: No, he was out working on the railroad... remember they took his store away and we lived in an apartment that they forced us to live and he went to work in the morning and he came home exhausted. And of course this one day he didn't come home; but this midwife called us and says, "Leave, leave the apartment or you too will be arrested."

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Question: So did you know where your Father had gone at that time?

Answer: No, at the time, no we didn't know it. He sent her a postcard though, and said, I'm in Auschwitz; everything is fine. Don't worry about me; I'll be home soon. And she was upset about that because she didn't want, because they were looking, you know, who they were sending mail to that she would be in trouble even though she was convinced Hitler would free her. But again nobody came after her or anything because again of her connection with the Nazi Party and Hitler. But it was just a postcard with a few lines that I'm sure he was told what to write.

Question: A couple things become interesting... cause I've never heard of anybody sending a postcard from Auschwitz.

Answer: Yes..

Question: You know, I've heard other prisoners in Prisoner of War camps, American prisoners caught sending home the mail but, but here so your Father was there

Answer: Yes, I do remember. I do remember. She, that midwife, she received the postcard from him and she was really kinda upset about that.

Question: Now did, I'll let this jet go by...

Answer: Oh isn't that beautiful music... I love airplanes. I own an aircraft.

Question: Oh...Did you have any idea at the time what Auschwitz was?

Answer: No...But we knew there were concentration camps, but I think my Mother knew. But we as kids were never told; we just thought that's where the place where they were forced to work. We did not know until later that, yes, we knew.. let's say, back in 1944 after about a year living under false names, we knew if we were caught that would be the end of our life. We knew that.

Question: Did you originally think that your Dad would be coming back?

Answer: Yes, yes.

Question: And you think that was part of your Mom protecting you?

Answer: Yes, uh huh.

Question: It's interesting because, and I didn't, you know I've read it places but I actually talked to somebody a couple months ago that tried to tell me that he had been over there. He'd gone to visit and he had seen, I forget which camp he went to, but he said, It's not real. He was trying, he was trying to tell me that, that..

Answer: Oh I get upset. Honestly, the last time I was in Munich, which goes back a few years, when I was sitting at a restaurant very close to Dachau... and I was talking to some Germans. In Germany, and they still do that today, when you sit in a restaurant and it's a busy restaurant, they'll put other people at your table, and uh, especially where you're on a highway. You know, they have rest stops with

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restaurants; and I was sitting at one of those tables, very close to Dachau. In fact I was driving to Dachau; I had a rental car, and I was sitting with these guys and I was saying how far is Dachau from here. Oh you aren't going to Dachau. I said, Yes I want to visit there. Oh forget it... it's all a big lie. That didn't happen, and I really got upset and I almost got into a big fight. I will say here I am Martial Arts trained; I have a second-degree belt and I don't want to do it or I'll break this. I can still put my hand like this on wood and can actually break wood. Well, I got so upset at this one guy and I said, You are dam liars. I happened to be here as a 12-year old child as a prisoner and don't tell me it has never happened, and just unconsciously I put my hand down on the table, raised everyone's hands and everyone of those guys, Waiter, waiter, check please, check please. They couldn't get out fast enough. But it's only my training in Martial Arts that I could actually keep my discipline, disciplined myself not to get into a real big fight.

Question: And that's where you would have gone, right, is to Dachau? You were on the train to..

Answer: That's right, well I was in Dachau. What Dachau.. if you should ever visit Germany and Dachau you will see the train station and then there's a fence and then there's a big sign Arbeit Macht Freiheit, means Work Gives You Freedom to go into the main camp. And... you know I wasn't inside the camp; I was at the rails and again now I know why... but at that time they didn't know what to do with us. They knew the Allies were right outside of Dachau and I also, again, I don't know who did it but I believe it was one of the guards that opened up the rail car and the one I was in the door just so that he could get preferred, preferential treatment, probably. And I did meet a U.S. Soldier that was one of the first troops into Dachau and I asked him once what happened to all the people that were in the rail car when you were there, when you liberated 'em. He says, Well there were rail cars full of people. There were a few open with empty ones but most of 'em had dead bodies in 'em that had numerous gunshot wounds in 'em. So I think when the Allies were actually in there, all the people that were still in the rail car they were just murdered, executed, machine-gunned down.

Question: Why do you think that Russian befriended you in the rail car?

Answer: I was a kid; I was a child and they just kept me. In fact, it may, I think one of them was actually a Russian Jewish Soldier.

Question: There was more the humanity of here's a scared child.

Answer: Exactly, exactly... and I was scared and I was beaten; I was... had bruises on me, my face and so forth.

Question: The people that beat you, when they captured you and threw you in and all that, was it pure, I mean... Today you hear President Bush talk about evildoers and, was that evil you saw?

Answer: Yes, yes. In fact, I put Saddam Hussein in the same category as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. I put 'em in the same category.

Question: Did you ever Hitler speak?

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Answer: Oh yes, but I never listened to him. But I heard him speak. Yes, many times.

Question: Oh, over the..

Answer: Over the radio, loud speakers, and actually I think I was preached already, well after the Kristallnacht my parents pretty much preached to me. Hitler's no good. We're going to go America. But my Father didn't have that much money. He was a tailor and struggling and I think he also felt he was safe when he was not arrested at Kristallnacht.

Question: It's interesting, the contrast between your Father and parents realizing that Hitler was evil and this midwife who for whatever reason didn't want to believe that Hitler knew what was going on. Was she upper class, the midwife woman or?

Answer: Yes, yes. In fact, I visited the apartment that she had in Berlin, which is still in upper class neighborhood today.

Question: Isn't that when she protected you she took you out of..

Answer: Occasionally, let's say, when we went to town and it was too late... we actually, I say we... whether it was my Mother, my brother or I, always individuals, we'd stay at her place overnight and then... In fact, I almost forgot about that... that rings bells, back memories now. She got us in touch with a person who lived in the outskirts of Berlin, out in East Berlin in Erkner, and the person was a driver of the train, the city train called the Stuk-bahn, the city-elevated train and he was the driver, very much anti-Nazi. And she may have been the mid-wife to his kids too. That I do not know because she didn't report him that he was anti-Nazi but he was not drafted into the Army until the very tail end of the war in Berlin. But whenever we took the train to this cabin that she had was on that route, we always took the train that he was working and then he let us go in the front together with him. And that was never inspected by the Germans or by the Nazis. And of course, but then we still had to take the streetcar to get to the points where, to get the ration cards from her. And that's where I was caught.

Question: What's amazing what she set up and whole... confusing the part again that she believed Hitler but yet here she had this friend who was anti-Nazi. Here she protected your family..

Answer: That's right. No she, I'm pretty sure, protected a few other people.

Question: So did you see glimpses of humanity that over.. outshone evil?

Answer: Oh yes. There were, I will say, there, not all Germans were bad and it's just like what you see in Iraq right now. You know, the people are too scared to talk, to speak out and that is what happened in Germany. I mean, I have seen evil. I have seen a German Soldier not giving the Nazi salute of Heil Hitler and giving a military, an SS Officer, just a military salute and the SS Officer pulled out his pistol and shot him. I've seen that; but I've also seen, especially I remember a submarine officer once that knew darned well that we were Jewish and yet he didn't turn us in. And not all of them were bad, but unfortunately the majority of the people were and...

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Question: And I've heard people say that when you saw the SS versus other soldiers that there was this whole different aura, everything was..

Answer: Oh definitely, definitely. Also, again I don't know if that's true but a lot of Germans have told me that, that all of the people that the military that were working at concentration camp putting Jews to death and so forth, beating them, were all volunteers. That nobody was at a concentration camp of the Germans unless they volunteered to be there. Of course today they'll tell you that isn't true.

Question: I know we've heard that there were no Nazis in Germany.

Answer: That's right.

Question: I mean that's what when we interview people, Oh no, there were no Nazis in Germany. Yes there were Nazis in Germany. It's kinda like the same thing in the South Pacific, They say oh, no, no our parents weren't fighting; they were just gone for a while. Well no they were doing whatever.

Answer: And but again I, actually I had a customer in Munich, Germany and I gave him up because the first time I visited him all of a sudden he couldn't speak English and we always communicated over the telephone; this is before email and I called him many times or faxes, always in English, but when I visited him in Germany he couldn't speak German, English. He says, well, you're in Germany now. We have to speak German. He didn't even know I spoke German. But what in Munich I see is I see the Nazi mentality all over again and of course that's where it started. But giving the old Nazi salute or wearing some all of the old Nazi paraphernalia is strictly illegal subject to arrest. But in Munich I have seen these punks giving Nazi salutes in front of police officers who just turn their face.

Question: So in this sixty years things haven't changed as much as people would like to say that the..

Answer: And websites are full of anti-Semitic websites. Unfortunately, a lot of them originate right here in the U.S.

Question: When you go back to Germany, do you face a lot of discrimination?

Answer: I don't let 'em know that I'm German, that I understand the language, except when I have to; and I'm just an American tourist. I give myself away when I do speak German to some, maybe I have, not quite sure where I'm going and they don't speak English or don't want to speak English, I'll speak German and they ask me, Gee where did you learn to speak German so well. I said in school and they don't believe me. My German is too good to... where I can't hide it.

Question: True German with a German accent.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Yeah, Do you remember Berlin being bombed?

Answer: Oh yes, oh yes.

Question: What was that like?

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Answer: Again, you got to.. My brother used to be very, very scared. But, I never was that scared. I figure when the time comes, the bomb hits; I'm dead, but there were usually bomb shelters and before I have to remember that for my book. I'm in the process of writing a book. You ask good questions here. But, before, 1940 and 1943, before my Father was arrested, and when the bombing started I remember the British used to bomb in the daytime and at night and the U.S. in daytime. I remember that and they had bomb shelters for the Germans to go into. But back in 1942, I believe in 1941 we had to wear the yellow Star of David, yeah, which was a real bad thing for us kids especially; but Jews were not permitted to go in the bomb shelter back in those days.

Question: So where did you go?

Answer: We just remained in our apartment. You couldn't.

Question: So are you seeing buildings being..

Answer: Oh yes, oh yes. Buildings across the street being bombed out. Oh yes. Now I think the Allies did try, I think the, the, they had information of what neighborhoods were the Jewish ghetto-like areas and I think they refrained from bombing them because even the store that my Father had is still, was never bombed, in that area.

Question: Does that building still exist today?

Answer: Yes, yes.

Question: Oh, it does?

Answer: In fact when the last one, well three years ago when I visited, there was a Chinese artifact store there. In fact I went in there. Last year when we were there it was empty; it was for lease. And of course that's one of the reasons I've been going back to Germany too, to Berlin, is most store owners, Jewish store owners had to buy the property like a condo here, you know, in the building. And I want to know what happened, who got the money for that property.. that my Father owned and I have not been able. I was more concerned in the past to get history on my parents and myself. Now I'm working on property. In fact, when we go in May I also plan to go to what used to be called Breslau, which is now Poland, Wroclaw Sp and see what happened to my Mother's family side. Of course, well I had an uncle that was a dentist, another uncle that was a lawyer and the family from my Mother's side were well to do. Of course, no one survived except one aunt who was an opera singer and she passed away in Vancouver. She left for Vancouver, apparently before the war; and I never knew about her until the late '70's; and she had passed away shortly when, before I went, tried to see her.

Question: It sounds like from what you've described that it wasn't the case of a Jew is a Jew is a Jew is a Jew, that even the SS segregated you even more specifically, is that right?

Answer: I don't know if I; I don't know. I really, I never gave that a thought, but no, I think because when they moved us into the various apartment buildings in

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Berlin which like I say was not in the best neighborhood, they had professional people there and common laborers. I mean..

Question: You talk about how your Dad was an American Jew versus a German Jew so you think..

Answer: There, I think they separated that a little bit. They gave him a little more freedom, I think, until the very end. Of course at the end they even arrested mixed marriages where the husband was Jewish and the wife was not and vice versa. But I think they did not arrest where the wife was Jewish and the husband was Christian, let's say. Right... They left those people alone but the other way around they arrested both.

Question: It's a.. Some of it's hard to fathom, I mean to contrast with what happened here.. with the Japanese-Americans and what happened in Germany because it is such a different thing. I mean what happened here was terrible what happened, but they weren't being executed.

Answer: I know some Nisei, which I don't know if you know what it means. A lot of people don't know what it means or Issei. Issei is the first generation and Nisei is the second generation. And some of the second generation is uh.. Japanese who really didn't have a profession. They were laborers, and they actually learned a profession in camp some of them, or the ones which I really find it hard to believe they did it, which they went into that 442nd Infantry battalion and became heroes while their parents were still in the concentration camp and I really admire those people.

Question: Which would have been like Hitler coming to you and saying I want you to fight for your country now.

Answer: Well I may mention something here. that I also just recently learned through my brother. My brother is just recently retired He spent twenty-two and a half years in the Army.. a year and a half in Vietnam and retired a major. He was initially drafted. He has a lot of time on his hands and has done a lot of research.. through the mail, and he actually just received the discharge papers of our father when he served in WWI in the German Army. He was drafted in the German Army and actually was a lieutenant in the German Army and injured, and he got the discharge paper from a field hospital in Germany. But again here my father was an American citizen drafted into the German Army. Of course I was technically a German citizen and I served with the US Army in Korea. In fact I remember when I took my test for citizenship while in the army stationed in Fort Leonard Wood Missouri. And I took the test and the interview with the.. I got the examiner from the immigration service and I was in an army uniform.. and one of the questions this examiner asked me was Would I bear arms for the US. But I said well.. and I had my orders for Korea!. And he says, I know it sounds funny but that is a formality.. we have to ask that question.

Question: Did you go to a Jewish School?.

Answer: Had to.. had to.

Question Had to?

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Answer: Yes. And I only went to the first grade and second grade and then they closed the school and we went into hiding.

Question: Had to because of Hitler's orders?.

Answer: Yes, they closed all the Jewish schools in 1940.... 41 already.

Question: Do you remember? I've asked this of some Japanese-Americans who were in school at that time.. These are your friends and the next day it's like they were your enemies.

Answers: Oh yes I remember that, we had friends and all of a sudden they wouldn't talk to us.. and beat us. That happened when we had to wear the Star of David.

Question: So even little kids?.

Answer: Yes.

Question: So the parents, or whoever taught them?.

Answer: It's the parents, I always say prejudice.. you aren't born with prejudice, you are taught. And the parents say don't associate with Jews.. they are animals.

Question: So even in that young age it crossed over and became this.. Sometimes you think kids.. children have such a blind eye to thing.. but

Answer: Of course you are not going to eliminate prejudice. And of course I sometimes find the same things that the Afro-Americans find right here in the US, Oh, some of my best friends are black, right.. well of course they know they are black. But with me a lot of people say.. and I hear them bad mouth a Jew. And I say.. Why you do that, I'm Jewish. Oh, I didn't mean it like that.. I have many friends that are Jews.

Question: Talking about the other Jews?

Answer: Yeah, I'm only talking about the other Jews.

Question: Was it chaos in Berlin. You've talked about WTO (The Seattle Riot) and comparing that. Was it just out of control evil hungry, power hungry people roaming the streets?.

Answer: That's right, it was the same type of hoodlums that used the demonstration over here at the world trade, except you had bigger quantities, and you had them through out Germany destroying Jewish property. And the Jews were like my Father and everyone else, if you tried to defend yourself you are dead.

Question: And endorsed by the government.?.

Answer: That's right, the government.. the police stood by to assure that no one defends themselves. But I mean.. you said it.. it was endorsed, but it was just an excuse to destroy.

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Question: Did you have aunts and uncles around or was it just your parents?.

Answer: I think it was only my Mother and Father, again our.. I know I had an Uncle that went to Shanghai back in 1937 or 38. We had two cousins, who one of them.. they were brothers. One of them went to South America, another to Shanghai. And after the war they came to live in Joplin Missouri. And that is whom my Brother and I then lived with when we came to the states 'til we finished high school and I went into the army. My brother worked for a local department store afterwards 'til he was drafted.

Question: What do you think the history books are leaving out about this?.

Answer: That.. and this is why I started talking and giving speeches to Rotaries and schools. In fact tow years ago I gave a talk to senior officers at Ft. Lewis, and I'm scheduled to talk to the 5th Cavalry division at Ft. Lewis in April. And.. because it shouldn't be forgotten. In fact I started to tell you earlier when I took my significant other to Berlin four years ago and they have this old SS headquarters that is now made into a memorial. They show pictures of what it was like and Uhm.. the torture chamber so to speak and what transpired there. And anyhow, to get in there they charge a fee to get in... and I couldn't help myself, when I went in and this girl asked me... I forget, it wasn't too much of an amount but I said... You know when I was twelve years old I went in here and I did not have to pay. She says, Were you in the Hitler Youth?. I said know I was on the other end. And then her boss came out and he asked me if I had been a prisoner and I said yes, when I was twelve years old. He got on a computer and my name was indicated. And he asked me.. incidentally I didn't have to pay to get in. And he asked me if I would be willing to give a tape interview. I said well what do you want it for. He says well.. that there was so much denial going on that we try to tape everyone that had been a prisoner here whether Jewish or Non-Jews. A lot of Germans that again had helped Jews were also put in there and tortured. And so he says that we are trying to get everyone like that, and then we are sending those tapes to high schools to eliminate denials. So I agreed to that interview and all together it was about a five-hour interview.. all in German. But a.. you do have this generation now that regrets what happened.. fortunately. And yet now, Germany does not want to ally themselves with the US right now and uh.. but I.. I'm not a great lover of Bush.. but I will say.. I'm somewhat stubborn and so forth.. but he did say something last night in his speech that I fully agree. That cancer you have to fully stop before it gets to big.. so Saddam Hussein is that problem.

Question: Do you think Hitler was that cancer or was it the country?.

Answer: Yes.. Well Hitler formed that cancer and infected the rest of the nation. You see when he took power Germany was in the midst of a big inflation. Worse then any depression we had here in the US. And the German people as a whole I think are gullible, and he just convinced them, and the majority of the people were convinced Hitler was God.

Question: Do you think it could happen anywhere?.

Answer: Yes, look at the old Yugoslavia, Cambodia.. the Pol Pot regime. And I think if Saddam Hussein has his way he could do it, at least in the Middle East. Well

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I think he tried twelve years ago when he went into Kuwait. If the US had not interfered, Saudi Arabia would have been next.

Question: Same type of protocol.. a uh... a sterilization a cleansing?.

Answer: That's right, look at Afghanistan, the Taliban. They started to cleanse out different religions.. and even made some of them that weren't their religion wear different clothing. The women had to wear different clothing.. like the Star of David we had to wear in Germany.

Question: Excuse me.. I have to change tapes here.