

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ARTHUR STERN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Philip G. Solomon

Date: May 15, 1990

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Holocaust Oral History Archive

Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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AS - Arthur Stern [interviewee]

PS - Philip G. Solomon [interviewer]

Date: May 15, 1990

Tape one, side one:

PS: This is Phil Solomon, interviewing Mr. Arthur Stern, for the Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College. Mr. Stern is a Veteran of the United States Army during World War II and served in Europe. The date is May 15, 1990. Arthur, where in Europe and in what unit were you serving before you arrived at the site of the concentration camp?

AS: I was with Company E, 232nd Infantry of the 42nd Division, 232nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd Division, which was part of the 7th Army. We had crossed the Rhine at Worms, Germany. We were on the way towards Munich when we were directed to Dachau. And Dachau was only about ten miles outside of Munich.

PS: Before you arrived at Dachau, which was what, do you recall the date, Arthur?

AS: Frankly, the exact date, no. I cannot.

PS: April, the end of April...

AS: I, I'm...

PS: I believe it was April 27th or April 28th. Arthur, you started out by mentioning crossing the Rhine at Worms. Was this over an established bridge? Would you care to describe that and the general conditions then and for the next number of days.

AS: Yes, a period, we crossed over a pontoon bridge that our engineers had constructed. We were informed just perhaps a few days, within a few days of that time that we crossed. And the weather conditions were very bad at the time. There was a lot of rain. As part of an infantry company we moved rather slowly through open fields, many times just so soaked with rain that we had to stop and pour water out of our boots. It was a miserable time because you had to march day and night. And many times freezing from the effect of the rain and the inability to get dry. And it was just, heh, a generally miserable time.

PS: Now you, your unit started in France, on the beach...

AS: No. The 42nd Division of which I was a part was really a, not a complete entity when it entered--what was the port in southern France?

PS: Oh, Toulon?

AS: No, it's a major seaport in southern France.

PS: Marseilles?

AS: Marseilles. And from a--we were assembled, when we arrived we, only our infantry components had arrived. We were assembled at a staging area about ten miles outside of Marseilles, in the hills outside of Marseilles. And then from there we were sent by train to the Strasbourg area. Since we were not fully assembled, some of our troops

were taken away from us as replacement troops for other divisions. In fact, some of my friends were sent to the 90th Infantry and died at Bastogne. I never saw them again once they had left. But at any rate, subsequently in the area around Strasbourg we had enough. When the rest of our components arrived, we started on the offensive. It would have been around, no, around December of 1944. And then the next few months were sheer hell in terms of an infantry company marching through enemy territory. The Germans, even though they were on the retreat, were very well-disciplined. They had a very fine weapon, the 88, which did tremendous damage to our troops. We could be marching through a field, and once the whole infantry division would be out on that field, all of a sudden from who knows where, artillery would break loose and they took a tremendous toll.

PS: At that time, while you were fighting within France, did you at that time see any evidence of German, of Nazi atrocities against civilians, military personnel, in--while you were in France?

AS: No. No I can honestly I did not.

PS: Then you entered Germany in what area?

AS: That would have been the Strasbourg area. That would be the Alsace Lorraine area of World War I.

PS: Yeah.

AS: War I. But it, and then we moved, as I said, it would have been north and east, towards...

PS: Belgium?

AS: No, no, no, what am I saying? No, east, no, not towards Belgium.

PS: Oh, east into Germany.

AS: Yes, yes.

PS: When you arrived in Germany, let's say between where you entered Germany in the Alsace area and the Rhine River, in that area did you there see any evidence of German atrocities? Let's say prisoner of war camps or slave labor camps?

AS: No.

PS: At that point you...

AS: No.

PS: ...hadn't.

AS: At that point we had not.

PS: Prior to arriving eventually at the site of the concentration camp, had you heard anything at all about the gassing of [coughing] pardon me, of Jews and political prisoners and Poles and, had you heard anything at all about concentration camps, the gassing, the crematoria?

AS: Amazingly, no. What we only knew that Jews were being rounded up in large numbers. We had heard this before in the States. We knew that they were being persecuted, but what the extent of the persecution was, or how they were treated, or the details, we had no idea.

PS: And during those early days in Germany, that is from the point you entered the country of Germany until you arrived at the site of the concentration camp, you had not seen any prisoners of war or slave labor who were liberated?

AS: On one occasion, we had taken a village and I recall a couple, a husband and wife, very frightened looking people, came over to me and apparently my appearance was obvious or they took a guess. They asked if I might be Jewish--in Yiddish. And I told them that I was. And they broke down and cried. They saw an American soldier.

PS: Now where were...

AS: And this was before we had arrived in the...

PS: At Dachau?

AS: At Dachau. We were...

PS: Were they...

AS: ...on the move. We were on the move.

PS: They had escaped probably or...

AS: No, what it, they had passed themselves off...

PS: Oh, oh.

AS: ...as Polish. And they were hiding, they were in fear for their lives lest one of the other Poles identify them as Jews. They were in a work camp.

PS: A work camp, yeah.

AS: And they broke down and cried. And I told them that the American troops were on the move and that just to be careful, to wait just another two or three days and once they were assured that the Americans were in occupation, they could turn themselves over to the American, to some American officer and identify themselves. But I said at the moment things were still in a state of flux and I advised them to be careful.

PS: To be careful. You were able to communicate with them.

AS: In Yiddish, yes.

PS: In Yiddish.

AS: Yes.

PS: Could you, were there others with them or were they alone or...?

AS: No, no. These people had stolen away from the work camp and they were just looking, they were hoping to be rescued at this point. And, I felt, you know, things were still in such a state of flux that I was afraid that they might jeopardize themselves yet. So I told them.

PS: Now, you've already given the identity of the concentration camp as Dachau. And approximately, the approximate date was about April 27th or 28th. Now, to the best of your memory, Arthur, can you please describe what you saw and what you felt at the time?

AS: Yes. Going back 45 years is rather difficult and nevertheless, it--there is, there are some very vivid memories of that period. When we arrived on the 27th or 28th, whichever day it was, it was in the afternoon. We were not the first troops who had entered.

We were following on the steps of some of the, another company or division that had just gotten in previous to us. And we were being sent in to relieve them so they could go on. And we were there, to stay there another day or two to occupy and make sure that the, that Dachau was liberated. And then we would be on the move again. You have to realize, at that point in time, the war was not over, things were, you know, there was still combat. We were still pursuing the Germans. And so we were, we could only stay to insure that the camp was liberated and that our own--I forget the name of the group that would come in and take over the camp. There was supposed to be a group of army trained people who would come over and occupy the camp. And these were not, they would be in the nature of, how shall I say, oh, tran-, they had translators. They would try to straighten things out and...

PS: Yeah.

AS: ...and arrange for food for the camp and so forth. At any rate, when we arrived, I was assigned, it was late afternoon, I was assigned to guard the women's area. There were separate dormitory type buildings, barracks they really were. And I was assigned to guard that area. The place was chaos. Food lines had been established. You have to realize, these people had been underfed. They were gaunt, they were hungry. So they had established food lines to try to supplement the food that they did not get. And there was a lot of chaos. What had happened, I heard, was, they had opened some of the buildings. These people had been left. The women that I spoke to told me, they would only wear one dress or something like that. They had very little clothes. So what they did, they opened a couple of buildings where there were clothes. The women actually, some of the women who really had lost all perspective, fought, would grab a dozen dresses, although it wouldn't do them any good to have a dozen dresses. They had just been so deprived that they in, just in desperation, they grabbed the dresses to compensate for what they didn't have in the last few months. That evening I sat at the front end of the, there was an office area at the front end of that barracks, and I chatted with some of the women in Yiddish who were thrilled that here was an American soldier who was Jewish and who could communicate with them. And there was such a feeling of euphoria. And yet at the same time, the tragedy, the shocks that they encountered, were so, had so affected them that in the course of conversation they would break down and cry. And it was a rather emotional period. I had an unusual experience in that there was one girl there, she was about 18 years old. A very unusual situation. This girl was a natural leader among the women. They looked up to her. If you can imagine an 18-year-old girl, they were looking up to her. She had--she was so staunch, and she walked with pride. And I said, "How did you manage to survive these last couple of years?" And she said, "When you worked, if you permitted yourself, if you fell down, you could be shot. You had to show them that you were not going to let them get the best of you." And at any rate, she told me that she had been from a Czechoslovakian family. Her family had been quite well-to-do. They had a big factory outside of Prague. And her whole family had been destroyed. And she said, at this point

she had one ambition, and that was, and this amazes me when I think of it, that was to go to *Eretz Yisroel*. Now here it, here the war, here they're being liberated from Dachau. We had no State of Israel founded yet, and she was already talking in terms of going to Israel. I was so moved by this girl's courage and bravery, and as I said, she had this natural leadership. During the night when, women would have nightmares during the night, and she would go and speak to them and quiet them down. And she was kind of up practically all night, walking around, just an amazing young woman, mature beyond her years. And I've always wondered, and I always thought whenever I thought of her, did she ever make it to Israel.

PS: This individual, can you describe her physical and mental, the way you describe her, certainly her mental outlook must have been excellent, considering what she had gone through.

AS: Yes.

PS: Her physical condition was...

AS: She was...

PS: ...similar to the others?

AS: She was very, now, she was very thin, very at-, very pretty girl, attractive, naturally pretty. But as I said, a very peaceful, how shall I put it, she--very self-possessed young woman, very resolute as I, she must have, as I said, and very poised. And just an unusual girl. And as I said, I, when she told me that she had been determined not to give way or to surrender in any way, that she would, she was determined to survive.

PS: That is a, such a wonderful and touching story of a, as you've just said, a fine young woman who is determined to survive...

AS: Yes.

PS: ...and help others.

AS: Yes.

PS: As bad as her situations were, that she still, you know, wished to help. Now, of those you observed, would you say that most of them were Jewish? Was it mixed?

AS: Yes.

PS: Was that a mixed area? Do you think maybe...

AS: I could not determine. The, as I say, I knew there were women, I couldn't identify them. I was posted at the one end of the barracks. I spoke to these people who came over to speak to me, because they were thrilled to find a young, American Jewish soldier.

PS: So they more or less sought you out because...

AS: They sought me out so I would have no idea of the composition of the group.

PS: Were there any children with them?

AS: No.

PS: Did you see, in observing through the areas that you saw within Dachau, did you see any children?

AS: No, I never did. Now, I'd like to go on with one thing.

PS: Yeah, certainly.

AS: During the night, sometimes one of the other soldiers would come over. We rotated, and they would tell me what they had seen. And I was told about the boxcars, loaded with bodies. And I was told that some of the soldiers had been trying to find SS people who--and they were determined if they could find an SS, member of the SS, they were gonna kill him. That's more easily said than done. Most of the SS had fled the camp.

PS: Yeah.

AS: But, at any rate, I was also told later that among some of the bodies in the boxcars they still found a few survivors. The boxcars had been laying on the tracks, we don't know for how long, before we arrived. They just were laying there and these people were permitted to die by the Germans. The next day, I had another interesting experience. I was assigned to the gas chambers. And this was another very vivid impression. For the first time, you know, when I entered the camp, there was a stench. And, you cannot describe this to anyone. The, an unbelievable odor. But it was just there under the sur-, how shall I, it was faint. It wasn't until I entered the gas chambers that I realized where the odor was coming from. And, it was a very moving experience for me. I saw these rooms with signs above the room saying *Brause Bad*, shower bath. And, I was told later that, with typical German efficiency, they would tell the people coming off the boxcars that they would be getting a shower bath. And these people, having stayed, been on the boxcars for so long, were just eager to get a shower and to be clean once again. They were told they would be given fresh clothes. So, this was a way to get them to take off their clothes voluntarily and then they went into the gas chambers where there--they never emerged alive.¹ And the Germans did not have to undress them. And they had all their clothes, and then the bodies were taken out and piled up on a heap. This heap of naked bodies was one of the worst, the, one of the, how shall I put it, it was a gross aberration. It was one of the worst things you could ever see. The, this pile of naked, gaunt, starved bodies, their eyes bulging, their tongues protruding, because they choked in the process of being gassed. And the Germans did not have time to get rid of the bodies. I understand they were short of fuel, and therefore, what we were smelling were the evidence, this pile of bodies. Afterwards, I went outside and I guarded the outside of the gas chambers. Around noon time, I decided I would eat lunch. You have to realize that, in my own particular case, I had gone through so much and I was emotionally and physically tired, and your body doesn't change. When you're hungry, you're still hungry. So, I opened a box of K-rations and I made a little fire out of the K-ration box, and I squatted there, heating up the can of K-ration food. And while I sat there, heating up the food, two journalists--they identified themselves later as journalists, one was from *The New York Herald Tribune* and one was from *The New York Times*, came out

¹In Dachau there was a crematorium that was used to burn bodies. In 1942 a gas chamber was built, but it was not put into use. (*Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Vol. 1, pp.340-342 and <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/en/historical-site/virtual-tour/crematorium-area/>)

of the gas chambers. And they looked at me squatting there, heating my food, and they said, they asked me, "Were you in there?" And I said, "Yes." "Did you see everything in there?" I said, "Yes." And they said to me, "How can you eat?" And, they both walked up to the wall, and one of them started to throw up. They just leaned against the wall and they were sick. But I guess, seeing me after what they had just seen, sort of capped it off. It wasn't that I--I'm not trying to apologize, but, as I said, I had seen so much that life still goes on, and these were, this was one of the impressions.

PS: This was the second day.

AS: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

PS: The day after you entered Dachau. At that time, can you, yes, I know it'd be difficult, can you give an estimate of how many you s-, how many living prisoners, survivors, you saw?

AS: That's difficult to say. I'd say...

PS: Yes.

AS: In the hundreds. Don't forget, I was only in one part of the camp.

PS: One, yeah.

AS: So I did not see the entire camp. We were spread out. So, I must have seen a few hundred people.

PS: Well, of those that you saw, the barracks that you guarded through the night, were any badly in need of medical treatment that they were not getting at that point?

AS: I could not tell. They were emaciated.

PS: Yeah.

AS: Some of them appeared to be, well, I'm sure they were in need of medical treatment. In the condition they were in they had to be in need of medical treatment...

PS: Yeah.

AS: Because they were undernourished. They were emaciated. They were starved.

PS: Well, at that time, was your unit and those, the few possibly who preceded you into Dachau, were they equipped to render medical aid to these people? You know, did they have...

AS: No.

PS: ...the equipment with them?

AS: No. I don't believe so.

PS: You were dependent more on...

AS: We were dependent on...

PS: Coming...

AS: ...the rear [unclear].

PS: Yeah, coming...

AS: Yeah.

PS: Yeah. Then you saw many, many, you would estimate, hundreds or thousands of bodies, carcasses, corpses that were unburied?

AS: Well, in the gas chambers I would say I must have seen, that pile must have been at least a hundred people were in that particular pile that I saw.

PS: And you saw, at your entry, you did not see any guards? Any *Wehrmacht* guards or SS?

AS: Oh no, no.

PS: And the reactions...

AS: They had since fled. They had fled.

PS: The general reaction of the prisoners as you entered? Now you mentioned about the women, especially the Jewish women who approached you, recognizing you. The general reaction as you entered was, just a little description?

AS: Oh, it was touching. It was, people cried, you know. It was tears of joy, of, you know, being released from what was certain death. Their time had been very limited until we arrived. They were just still lucky to be alive, and here we came and we were their salvation.

PS: During that first day and second day, had a plan been established and put into effect for a program for feeding these...

AS: Yes. There was a program. I don't know who was in charge of it. I, you know, apparently there must have been some group that arrived from the rear lines who were in charge. But I could not ascertain that. In, you know, I was at the lower end of the echelon. And I was just a soldier who was assigned to guard and I could not tell what the mechanics of...

Tape one, side two:

PS: Phil Solomon, continuing the interview of Mr. Arthur Stern. The, you, of course, recall very vividly your own reaction when you entered the camp and saw sites, certainly, that you had never expected to see. Would you say that all the men in your unit reacted with about the same degree of shock? Did they all take it about the same way?

AS: Yes, I would say so. And I'd say it was not a matter of whether you were Jewish or Gentile or what.

PS: Yeah.

AS: The same shock would have affected you, just to have seen peop-, man's inhumanity.

PS: Yeah.

AS: Yes, I would say most people were profoundly affected.

PS: At that point you had already seen death of your fellow soldiers, your buddies, and also death of the enemy. In other words, soldiers, uniformed men who are a part of the fighting forces that you had not seen a sight like this where the dead were women, children, civilians. Which, of course I imagine, gives you a completely different reaction.

AS: Yes.

PS: How long did you remain at this location?

AS: We were, the day, the second day, the day I described, where I was outside the gas chambers, we moved out late that afternoon.

PS: That was the second day.

AS: Yeah. So...

PS: Arthur...

AS: ...the whole period was rather limited. However, as I said, just by word of mouth, soldiers who had been around the camp and who were in different places would tell each other their experiences and what they had seen. And it was profoundly moving. One other thing, the, some soldiers had gone to Munich on some patrol, and they spoke to the German people in Munich about Dachau and asked them whether, what they knew, you know. Did they know what was going on and they said, "Oh no! We had no idea!" And, this was incredible, because the, just the odors from the extermination, from burning these people...

PS: When the...

AS: ...would have told them of the horrors that were taking place. I'm sure they knew. But yet to have these people say in bland innocence, "Oh, we did not know what was going on."

PS: When the wind blew from that direction, they must have gotten a dosage of odors that, then too, there were many, many guards at the camp.

AS: Sure.

PS: And certainly they left the camp at different periods.

AS: Absolutely.

PS: And certainly there was a lot of talk...

AS: Absolutely.

PS: ...within the town.

AS: Absolutely.

PS: Now you...

AS: It was not, you cannot believe that they did not know.

PS: So you left the end of the second day.

AS: Yes.

PS: Did the experience of seeing this have any effect on your feeling about being part of the war and fighting Germany?

AS: Well, from that point on, you know, up till then, I still felt that, I knew that there had been a war against the Jews on the part of the Germans. And I felt my--I felt all along that I was, you know, doing something very worthwhile. But until I actually saw the atrocities of Dachau, I--there was a total sense of commitment afterwards, more so than I had ever experienced before.

PS: In other words, prior to your seeing these horrible atrocities, you knew what you were fighting for. I think after seeing it, you knew what you were fighting against, the...

AS: Yeah, absolutely.

PS: ...genocidal...

AS: You expressed that...

PS: ...genocidal monsters.

AS: You express that very well.

PS: At that time, Arthur, oh, first of all, this was, so be it April 27th or 28th, the official V-E day, Victory in Europe, was May the 8th, 1945. Now when you realize that this was your first total awareness of what was going on, and this was just a matter of days--one week before the total coll-, before the end of the war--it so happens I had the same experience, and it's just mind boggling when you think that so many of the major concentration camps were not discovered until the very end, the last week or ten days of the war.

AS: Yes.

PS: Another question relating to that. You saw Dachau, and it just threw you completely. But Arthur, at that time, as bad as this was, did you in your wildest imagination think at that time that Dachau was only one of many and was not actually one of the worst of the death camps?

AS: Phil, I had no idea. Until I saw Dachau, I had no idea what was going on, and after I saw Dachau, I did not know that this was multiplied...

PS: Yeah.

AS: ...by so many other camps where, I did not know about Buchenwald or Theresienstadt or any of these other places.

PS: Yeah.

AS: I, and so, you know, it's all the more shocking.

PS: In your own mind, can you explain German decisions that led up, that led to the setting up of concentration camps?

AS: Only that there was a desire to have a pure Aryan Germany and to rid Germany of all Jews. Just total extermination of all Jews.

PS: And of course, all that they considered under, what did they call, *Untermenschen* or, sub-human...

AS: Yes, sub-humans, yes.

PS: The Poles, the, yeah, there were as many, there were six million Jews killed, and six million other than Jewish. Do you know if there's a regimental history in the 42nd Division? Regimental history that included this experience?

AS: Phil, this is my own fault. I never--once I left the service, it's as though I wanted to just wipe the slate clean.

PS: Yeah.

AS: And I never, I never really took the trouble to follow up. Another factor was this: the regiment, the 42nd Division, some divisions were formed from State units. And if you came from a particular State, and you were with that division it was easy to follow up and to...

PS: Yeah. There were...

AS: The 42nd was a hodge podge. It was assembled from all over the country. It, ostensibly it was supposed to be a New York Division, but it wasn't. A lot of it was formed in Oklahoma before we embarked for Marseilles. We were at a camp in Oklahoma. So, the point was that it wasn't the type of division where you could readily spot people in Philadelphia or elsewhere. I don't know of any Philadelphians, for instance, from that particular. There probably were. Oh, I only met one person. I only met one person, and he's dead many years now, who was in the 42nd Division from Philadelphia. And I've never met anyone else.

PS: Did any of the prisoners that you spoke to or contacted, did any of them ever contact you? Were they able to, were there any that knew how to reach you or...

AS: No, none at all.

PS: There had been some very unusual circumstances. I myself, years later, forty years later, just met by accident someone who actually was in a group present.

AS: That's amazing.

PS: It is amazing.

AS: That's amazing.

PS: It is, really.

AS: Truly amazing.

PS: How long did you remain in Europe after the end of the war?

AS: Well, we became part of an Army of Occupation in Austria. And we were staged in the Salzburg-Innsbruck area, in the Tirol, in the Austrian Tirol.

PS: Yeah. Was that anywhere near the concentration camp of Mauthausen?

AS: I never heard mention of Mauthausen.

PS: Oh, oh. That was one of the, that was very, very bad. It was...

AS: Yeah.

PS: That was about 80 miles west of Vienna.

AS: Is that right.

PS: I mention that for a reason.

AS: Yes.

PS: Had you answered in the affirmative...

AS: Yes.

PS: ...I had some...

AS: You know...

PS: ...questions.

AS: I had not heard any mention of that camp.

PS: You then remained in the Army of Occupation. And did you have any experiences, did you see oh, Ger-, the reaction of German civilians that you were in, that you met, or anything, during the period that you remained in Europe. Now, first of all, you remained in Germany as part of the Army of Occupation?

AS: Well, in Austria.

PS: Oh, in Austria, yeah.

AS: In Austria.

PS: Now, during that period, did you have any unusual experiences with Austrian civilians? Anything that would relate to the history of the war, or the Holocaust?

AS: No, I did not. The Austrians were also very anxious to disavow themselves...

PS: Yeah.

AS: ...of any knowledge of some of the atrocities. When we, when you would mention those things, they were innocence personified. But, you know, as far as any remarkable or unusual experiences with the population, no, no.

PS: They, did, at that time they express, did you have any verbal contact at all with the Austrians and how long were you in Austria?

AS: We were in Austria until, let's see, the war was over in May, until about September. And then we were sent back to France. We were sent to a staging area outside of Cherbourg. And that was a tent city. And we stayed there two months.

PS: One of what they called the cigarette camps?

AS: Yes.

PS: It was Old Gold, Lucky Strike, and...

AS: Yes.

PS: [unclear].

AS: Yes.

PS: Yeah, I was there too.

AS: Yes.

PS: Did your--what you saw was so deep and inhuman, did it cause you ever to reflect on your faith in your religion?

AS: Yes. Yes, to the extent that you ask yourself, you know, growing up, and, I grew up in an Orthodox home. And there was almost a sort of a blind faith. You, you know, the concept, your own concept of God, this supernatural being who is aware of all our deeds and who looks over us and after us, and so forth. I--all that changed. Because I realized that, well, the first feelings you get is, What God could permit this to happen to innocent women and children, to over six million people? And your fa-, my faith was definitely shaken. Gradually I had to reassemble my own faith and look at it from another perspective and realize that my concept of God was a biblical concept based on childhood impressions, on biblical narrative and so forth. And that I would have to think of another type of God who gives us strength in times of stress and so forth, but certainly not a supernatural being who controls the destiny, who personally intercedes to help people or anything like that. I had to change all that, or else I could not have survived any belief at all.

PS: See, I myself, I was trained and educated in a very dedicated family within Conservative Judaism, and I too, I sought, I personally sought a way to try to get out of my mind that No, if there were a God, He would not have permitted this.

AS: Yes.

PS: And actually, the way I reconciled it within myself was, that as bad as it was, it, that God, we did win. We won the war. The good guys won the war. We did halt the genocide that would have gone much, much further. Had it gone on, our own country here, the United States must, might have fallen. They might have ruled the entire world and the casualties which reached 12 million just in the--we're only speaking of the concentration camps, not the general war casualties--I reconcile it within myself, as bad as that was, it's beyond, it's mind boggling, and yet had we not won when we did, it could have been 50 million. It could have been 100 million. So, I think that's the way I sort of saved myself.

AS: Well you have to. You have to rationalize, or else you lose all faith completely. You have to look for some, for some meaning. Because if you don't find that then you're lost.

PS: I think we've reached about the end of the questions I had in mind and had prepared to ask you. And certainly you've given us a wonderful testimony, Arthur. Now is there anything that I didn't cover, or your discussions that went beautifully over and beyond some of the questions I asked you. Is there anything at all that we didn't cover, that you would like to add to your testimony?

AS: No, Phil. I tell ya, I--every per-, every one, every soldier, every person who went through the service has his own unique experiences and impressions and so forth. I, when it was all over, I was fortunate, and when I was in the staging area in, outside of Rheims, France, waiting for the ships to take us home, I got a letter from home telling us that my uncle and his family, who had lived in northern France and whom we thought had perished, were still alive, and they were able to make it back to their city, to Lille. And that was one redeeming aspect. I found out, for instance, that their two children had been sheltered by nuns in a monastery some place or, not a monastery, where nuns stay. A monastery is for men. Well...

PS: A convent?

AS: A convent. A convent. And that they themselves had been hidden by French farmers and even though, you know, that in France there was a lot of antisemitism, you could feel there was a, there are a lot of redeeming factors, that there were good people out there. There were people in, despite all the atrocities and despite all the horrors, that there were some good people. We found out about them. We found out about them since with Yad Vashem. But there were good people out there who did try to help, who tried to save our children, our women and children. And this was a beautiful and redeeming factor.

PS: Arthur, you have given us some very, very meaningful testimony. And on behalf of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive, I certainly want to express our gratitude for you for coming in and giving us such meaningful conversation and testimony. And on behalf of Gratz College, we thank you very much.

AS: Thank you, Phil, for giving me this opportunity.