

**RG-50.544\*0001**

**Lou Dunst Interviewed by Judge Norbert Ehrenfreund**

**Featured in the show *From the Ashes* (Produced by Timothy Sprague and Directed by Leilani Sprague)**

**One Videotape, In English**

**Taped October 27, 1999**

### **Abstract**

Judge Norbert Ehrenfreund was a reporter at the Nuremberg Trial War Crimes Trial. He chose to interview Lou Dunst, a Holocaust survivor, in a form that would have resembled a questioning session at the trial. In 1940, Lou was living with his family in Yasinya, Czechoslovakia when the Hungarians occupied his town and forced his father into slave labor. Lou and several of his peers were also forced into slave labor at a nearby camp. In 1944, Lou, and the other Jews from his town, were packed into boxcars and sent to a ghetto in Mátészalka, Hungary. They stayed there for several weeks until they were again packed into boxcars and deported to Auschwitz.

Upon arrival, he and the others underwent a selection headed by Dr. Mengele. Lou never saw his mother again after the selection, and his father was soon gassed as well. Lou was able to stay with his brother and was placed into a barrack in Birkenau. He was soon transferred to Mauthausen with several other young men. While there, they were put into a gas chamber. They thought they were about to die but survived the experience and were sent to Ebensee to “disappear.” They lived under difficult conditions in Ebensee and witnessed several brutal tortures. Lou even considered suicide on several occasions, but his brother helped him to survive.

By the springtime of 1945, the war was coming to an end. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Lou was placed on a pile of those who were dead or dying. However, the American Army liberated the camp later that day, and his brother was able to remove him from that pile. After liberation, Lou was taken to Linz, Austria and eventually on to a hospital in Prague. Lou later came to America, where he lives today.

### **Transcript**

**Judge Norbert Ehrenfreund:** When the trial of the Nazi war criminals began in Nuremberg, the story of the Holocaust was about to be told for the first time. There were many who hoped that the trials might bring some sense of closure to the Holocaust. But we know now from the trial’s evidence that there can never be closure to the Holocaust, for it is like a black pit where the bodies of six million Jews lie at the bottom along with millions of others deemed undesirable by Adolf Hitler. The war ended in 1945. I fought in that war. I was a soldier in that army. I fought in France, Germany and Austria. And when the war was over in that year of 1945, thousands of GI’s started going home—back to the states and back to their jobs. I had no job to which to go back. I was a young man in my early twenties, so I took a job with the American newspaper in Europe *The Stars and Stripes*. And one of my first assignments was to cover the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. Some have called it the greatest trial in history. There were many questions in our minds, among those of us that were in the press, as the trials got underway—questions that still remain unanswered. How could a nation—perhaps the most cultured nation on earth—how

could it have suddenly turned so barbaric? How could it have organized its people to participate in those atrocities? Questions like those we are still asking today. I can not recreate all of that trial to you of course. The trial went on for eight months, and it had many dramatic periods. But there is something that I can do, and I will do. I am going to call to the stand, as it were, a man who might have been called to the stand at the Nuremberg Trials. He wasn't called—he was too ill at the time, and they could not find him. But his testimony is typical and much like the testimony we heard at the Nuremberg Trials. This is not a play. This is not an act. The man you are about to hear—his story is very real, and I will call to the stand now Lou Dunst.

**Judge:** Would you state your name please?

**Lou Dunst:** Lou Dunst.

**Judge:** Would you spell your last name.

**Lou Dunst:** D-U-N-S-T.

**Judge:** And how old are you Mr. Dunst?

**Lou:** I am 73 years old.

**Judge:** Mr. Dunst—I want to take you back in time to when you were fourteen years old. That would have been about the year 1940 or 1941. Is that correct?

**Lou:** That is correct.

**Judge:** Where were you living then?

**Lou:** In Yasinya, Czechoslovakia.

**Judge:** And who were you living with?

**Lou:** With my parents. Mother, father, sister, and brother. I am the youngest of the family.

**Judge:** Yes, and what did your parents do?

**Lou:** My parents had a retail store. A general merchandise retail store.

**Judge:** And what happened then? Tell us what happened in that year when you were fourteen.

**Lou:** In that year they took away all the Jewish men to slave labor, where they worked them very hard under very bad conditions as far as freezing, starving, beatings, and torture.

**Judge:** Just a minute, you said, "They took..."

**Lou:** Yes, at that time we were occupied by the Hungarians.

**Judge:** Yes, and did they take your father also?

**Lou:** Yes, they did—all Jewish men including my father. They called it munkatabor.

**Judge:** What happened? What did they do?

**Lou:** They had to go to slave labor, and they worked them very hard under very rough conditions.

**Judge:** Did they tell you why they were doing this?

**Lou:** They did not say why. They...

**Judge:** They just came into your house and took him away?

**Lou:** Well he had to go. That was the law. They all have to go—all Jewish men.

**Judge:** And this was a time when the war was on is that right?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** And what did you do during that time?

**Lou:** They took us teenagers to a slave labor camp called Levente. And we had to load and unload Military equipment. They worked us all day, all night—whenever they wanted.

**Judge:** Did you still live at your home?

**Lou:** Yes, we were at home. The children were at home. The father was not.

**Judge:** Well who were your bosses? Who told you to do this?

**Lou:** Well it was the Germans and the Hungarians.

**Judge:** And why did they do this to you—to your family?

**Lou:** Because we were Jewish.

**Judge:** So how long did this go on?

**Lou:** That went on until we were taken away to Auschwitz.

**Judge:** When were you taken away?

**Lou:** Prior to that they rounded up Jewish people from other countries and brought them into our place—about 14,000 men, women and children, and they were starving. They brought them in boxcars, and they were crying for food and water. We shared with them whatever we had.

**Judge:** You mean, in your town?

**Lou:** Yes, in our town.

**Judge:** You saw those people gathered in your town?

**Lou:** Yes that was an end station because it was a border town.

**Judge:** What was the name of that town?

**Lou:** Yasinya.

**Judge:** Alright.

**Lou:** At that time they changed it to Körösmezö.

**Judge:** Alright. And how old were you at this time?

**Lou:** I was fourteen, fifteen years... fifteen years old.

**Judge:** And when they brought all these people into your town. How old were you then?

**Lou:** Fifteen years old.

**Judge:** And when was it you were taken away?

**Lou:** In '44. The beginning of '44.

**Judge:** And how old were you then?

**Lou:** I was eighteen.

**Judge:** Okay, you were eighteen years old.

**Lou:** Eighteen.

**Judge:** Tell us exactly what happened when you were eighteen and how you were taken away.

**Lou:** They knocked on the door one early morning, and we all had to get ready real quickly in a hurry.

**Judge:** Yes, who knocked on the door?

**Lou:** The Hungarian Gendarms, and beside them they had Germans.

**Judge:** And who was in you home at the time?

**Lou:** We were all at home. My Parents, my sister, and brother.

**Judge:** How old was your sister at the time?

**Lou:** My sister is four years older than I am, and my brother is two years older than I am.

**Judge:** And did they come at night or day?

**Lou:** No, it was early in the morning.

**Judge:** Did you know they were coming?

**Lou:** We had no idea. We did not know.

**Judge:** Had your father returned from this slave labor?

**Lou:** At that time he was back from the slave labor. Yes.

**Judge:** And did they tell you why they were taking you away?

**Lou:** They did not tell us why. All they told us was that the Jewish people have to do what they say, or else they will be shot.

**Judge:** So tell us what happened.

**Lou:** Well we had a synagogue in our neighborhood. There were three Torahs. We brought those Torahs back nice and neatly in our home.

**Judge:** Yes, then what happened?

**Lou:** We were all taken downtown to the center of the village and were put into a large building. At one time it was a theater.

**Judge:** Well what happened when you were taken away? What happened to your home?

**Lou:** We had to leave it just the way it was.

**Judge:** Was it a house or an apartment?

**Lou:** A home. We had a home.

**Judge:** Yes, and what happened to your father's store?

**Lou:** It was given away to the Nazis.

**Judge:** Alright, so you were taken to the center of town. Is that right?

**Lou:** Yes, we were at the center of town in a large building.

**Judge:** Were there other people gathered together?

**Lou:** All the Jewish people from that town at that time were all there, and we didn't even fit because the building wasn't large enough to hold us. So some of us had to stay outside in the rain and...

**Judge:** When you went out this way, did you take your belongings with you?

**Lou:** They told us that we didn't need to take anything. We were only going to the downtown area. To the center of town.

**Judge:** Did you have any idea where you were going?

**Lou:** We had no idea. They didn't tell us anything.

**Judge:** These people who took you, were they Hungarian or German?

**Lou:** Hungarians, and some Germans, and local Nazis.

**Judge:** Were they in uniform?

**Lou:** Yes, some of them were uniformed, some were civilian, and some wore black uniforms.

**Judge:** Did they have guns?

**Lou:** Yes, they had machine guns.

**Judge:** Did they threaten you in some way?

**Lou:** At that time they did not. They just told us. Umm, then they took us up to the Jewish cemetery, and before you get to the Jewish Cemetery there is a flat piece of land, and we were told that we were going to have to dig our own graves, and we will be machine gunned down.

**Judge:** Why did they tell you? Why did they make it such a threat? Why were they going to do this?

**Lou:** The only thing they knew is because we were Jewish. That was the only answer.

**Judge:** Alright. You were still in your town?

**Lou:** We were in our town by the cemetery waiting to...

**Judge:** This would have been what year?

**Lou:** '44. The beginning of 1944...

**Judge:** 1944.

**Lou:** 1944.

**Judge:** The war was still on?

**Lou:** Yes, the war was on—very well on, in fact, at that time.

**Judge:** Was your town occupied by foreign troops at that time?

**Lou:** No, except the Germans were there and the Hungarians.

**Judge:** Alright, and the Germans and Hungarians were working together?

**Lou:** Yes, they were working together.

**Judge:** Alright, and what happened then?

**Lou:** Something changed. They rounded us up. We couldn't do anything. But something changed, and they took us to the railroad.

**Judge:** How did they walk you down the road?

**Lou:** Yes, we were walked. We were marched from the cemetery to the railroad.

**Judge:** And your family was...

**Lou:** All together. We were all together. All the Jewish people from the whole town. There was not one Jewish person in town that was not there. We were all there.

**Judge:** They marched you all to the railroad?

**Lou:** To the railroad.

**Judge:** Is that right. And then what happened there?

**Lou:** We were put in boxcars. Packed tight, and they did not have any facilities as far as toilet facilities. There was a bucket on one end. The one that had to go to the other end would never make it. By that time we already had diarrhea and other illnesses.

**Judge:** Well okay. They packed you all as I understand into these boxcars.

**Lou:** Correct.

**Judge:** Is that right?

**Lou:** Yes

**Judge:** And the boxcars had no facilities, no water, no....

**Lou:** No water, no food, not enough air.

**Judge:** Did you have any food with you?

**Lou:** No, no. They did not give us any food.

**Judge:** Alright. So when you were in the boxcars did they tell you where you were going to go?

**Lou:** They locked the doors from the outside, and off we went.

**Judge:** Was there any air coming in at all?

**Lou:** Very little. A lot of people had trouble breathing because the openings were just small openings on top on those boxcars.

**Judge:** Were there children? Were there babies?

**Lou:** There were children, there were babies, there were pregnant women, there were old people, and there were sick people. Yes.

**Judge:** Alright. Then what happened after you were locked in the boxcar?

**Lou:** Off we go. The machine gave a whistle. Like a happy whistle we were ready to go. And we were traveling day and night. We did not know where.

**Judge:** You did not know where you were going?

**Lou:** We had no idea.

**Judge:** So what happened in those boxcars? How did you exist?



**Lou:** Well it was very hard because some people soiled their clothes because they couldn't get to the bucket. Many of us had diarrhea. Some people, excuse me, were vomiting. It was a bad trip.

**Judge:** And the doors would not open?

**Lou:** The doors would not open.

**Judge:** How long was this trip?

**Lou:** Day and night. I don't remember how many days or how many nights, but it was several days and nights till we came to our last stop.

**Judge:** What was the condition of the people that were in the boxcars? Did any of them die?

**Lou:** No, not at that time. I don't remember anyone dying as of yet. Later on they did, but at that time, no.

**Judge:** Well you came to the last stop. Where were you? Do you know?

**Lou:** They opened up the doors, and we were in Hungary. A town called Mátészalka. We were put into a ghetto.

**Judge:** That was a ghetto in Hungary?

**Lou:** A ghetto in Hungary. Yes.

**Judge:** So you got out of the boxcars...

**Lou:** Out of the boxcars. Into a ghetto—a small space. Too many people.

**Judge:** Yes.

**Lou:** We had no room to lie down. There were threats: If you go here you were shot, if you go here a pregnant woman will get shot, if you do this you get shot. Everything was under threats.

**Judge:** When you say a ghetto, what do you mean—a building or a room?

**Lou:** It was a section of a town, and it was marked "This is the ghetto."

**Judge:** And you can't go outside right?

**Lou:** No, you step over, and you get shot.

**Judge:** Did anyone step over?

**Lou:** Not that I know of.

**Judge:** And there were people guarding you?

**Lou:** There were people guarding us all of the time.

**Judge:** With guns?

**Lou:** With machine guns.

**Judge:** Yes, and were they wearing Nazi army badges of some kind?

**Lou:** Yes, they wore German uniforms: SS German uniforms and German Gendarms and Hungarian Gendarms.

**Judge:** So what happened when you were in this ghetto?

**Lou:** We were, several days later, taken to a cemetery in Mátészalka. And we were told to give up everything we had in our pockets like a pen, a pencil, a notebook, or a watch, and we were told that if we don't give up everything that they will search our bodies. We will be shot, those that don't give up everything.

**Judge:** So is that what you did?

**Lou:** Yes, we gave up everything. And when they said they would search the body, they included human cavities.

**Judge:** Yes.

**Lou:** And they are brutal.

**Judge:** So how long were you in that ghetto?

**Lou:** A couple of weeks or so. Something to that effect. I don't remember the exact time element.

**Judge:** Was it outside?

**Lou:** Yes. Well there were houses there. Now some people were able to get in to the attic, in the basement, or in the house. It was a closed-in area.

**Judge:** So how did you eat? How did you get food?

**Lou:** There was very little food—maybe just enough to survive.

**Judge:** Alright. Did they tell you? Did they ever tell you why they were doing this to you?

**Lou:** They didn't tell us. They did not tell us. They just told us to be nice and quiet and behave.

**Judge:** Alright, so you stayed there for several weeks in the ghetto? And then what happened?

**Lou:** We were marched off to the railroad.

**Judge:** Back to the railroad again?

**Lou:** Put in boxcars. Same procedures as far as food or other facilities. Off we go.

**Judge:** And then you went on another trip in the boxcars?

**Lou:** We were locked in the boxcar.

**Judge:** Did they tell where you were going then?

**Lou:** They did not tell us. They did not tell us.

**Judge:** And what happened on this trip?

**Lou:** Well off we go day and night, back and forth. They hooked on other trains and other boxcars, and we traveled several days and several nights.

**Judge:** How crowded was this boxcar?

**Lou:** It was very crowded.

**Judge:** What do you mean by that?

**Lou:** Very crowded because they pushed us in. They, by force—they forced as many of us as they could in standing up like this. (He uses his hand to show that people were forced to stand right up against one another.)

**Judge:** Well at night were you able to all lie down and sleep?

**Lou:** No, there was no room to lie down.

**Judge:** Alright, and this went on during the trip for several days and several nights?

**Lou:** Several days and several nights. Yes, stop and go, for several days and several nights.

**Judge:** Did people suffer? How did they live? How did they exist?

**Lou:** Well they were just suffering, and most of us didn't say anything. We didn't know what to say or to whom to say it.

**Judge:** You're still together with all your family?

**Lou:** Still together, still together. All families.

**Judge:** You stayed together.

**Lou:** All the families were still together, yes.

**Judge:** Again, were there babies or children?

**Lou:** Little babies, children, sick people. Yes, all together.

**Judge:** Alright. Where did you stop?

**Lou:** Last stop, the doors opened up, and everybody went out. At that time there were some that were lying there in their own excrement, and they couldn't get up. Some were dying, some were dead, and some lost their reasoning.

**Judge:** That is when they opened the boxcars? And what happened?

**Lou:** We were told to get out. So those that were able got out.

**Judge:** Where were you then?

**Lou:** That was Auschwitz.

**Judge:** In what country?

**Lou:** In Poland.

**Judge:** That was the Auschwitz—the famous Auschwitz Concentration Camp?

**Lou:** Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Yes.

**Judge:** When you got out of the boxcars, where did you go then?

**Lou:** We didn't know where we were. We asked the inmates that worked where we were. They told us Auschwitz. We didn't know what Auschwitz was or what it meant. So they told us that we were going to be gassed and cremated. We did....

**Judge:** Who told you this?

**Lou:** The inmates that worked there.

**Judge:** You mean other...

**Lou:** Other inmates.

**Judge:** Other Jewish inmates.

**Lou:** Other Jewish inmates. There were ninety-five percent Jewish inmates.

**Judge:** As soon as you got out of the boxcars you had contact with them?

**Lou:** Yes, we talked with them, yes. Our own language in Yiddish.

**Judge:** And they told you that you were going to be gassed and cremated?

**Lou:** That's what they told us, and we did not believe them. We did not. They said, "You see the chimneys. You see the smoke."

**Judge:** What did you see?

**Lou:** The chimneys and the smoke. And they say can you smell it? Yes, we did smell it.

**Judge:** What did you smell?

**Lou:** It smelled like burned hair. If you take hair and burn it, that's what it smelled like.

**Judge:** So okay, you're out of the boxcars.

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** You were told you were going to be gassed and cremated.

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** And where did all of your family go?

**Lou:** It was chaos. You were chased. You go here. You go there. You go here. You go there.

**Judge:** Just a minute. You were with your mother, your father, your sister, and your brother?

**Lou:** We were still all together, but then we were being separated because my mother and sister went this way (He puts right hand up and points to the right). That was the last time I saw my mother (He begins to cry). And my father and my brother went this way (He points to the left). Shortly, we were separated from our father, and he was murdered...

**Judge:** Just a minute Mr. Dunst. Are you okay?

**Lou:** I am okay. I can continue.

**Judge:** Are you okay to go on?

**Lou:** Yes, we can go on...my father was murdered either in Auschwitz or Buna.

**Judge:** Now just a moment. I want to make sure that I get the picture. You got out of the boxcars. You were still with your family, and you were marched somehow to a place where people told you where to go.

**Lou:** Yeah, there was Dr. Mengele with his entourage. And everybody had a stick, and if you did not follow what they wanted you to do, they hit you, and the dogs were biting you in the legs, and this is how...

**Judge:** The dogs...

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** ...were chasing you?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** And when you came up you came up to a group of doctors in white coats?

**Lou:** They were doctors. No, they didn't have white coats. I don't remember seeing...

**Judge:** Uniforms?

**Lou:** Uniforms, Uniforms.

**Judge:** And you're still with your mother?

**Lou:** At that time we were still with our mother.

**Judge:** And then someone, you said someone...

**Lou:** Yeah, separating you go here, you go to there.

**Judge:** Who said that?

**Lou:** The SS, the doctors. Dr. Mengele was there, but he was not by himself. He had a whole entourage. There were many of them there.

**Judge:** So they decided at that point to separate your family. Is that right?

**Lou:** Yes, Yes. All the families were separated.

**Judge:** How were they separated? I mean, what was the reason? What was the criteria for separating them?

**Lou:** They did not give us any reason or why and how. Now the inmates were saying that mothers who had little babies should give them away for the baby to survive. So can you imagine them taking away a baby from the mother—a newborn baby? It was horrible. The expressions on their faces were horrible.

**Judge:** Try to describe it for us. I know it's hard. Try to describe what happened to those mothers with those babies. What was happening?

**Lou:** Well we had our own problems because they had to go this way (He points towards the right) and we were already (He points towards the left)...

**Judge:** Who had to go that way?

**Lou:** The women, the children, whoever. They were separating us.

**Judge:** Women and children went one way?

**Lou:** One way, yes. Probably those were the children, and they probably went straight to the gas chamber.

**Judge:** Why did they separate the women and the children from the men?

**Lou:** They didn't tell us. They said that the women are going to do the cooking, and the men are going to go to work. And everything is going to be alright.

**Judge:** And the women and their children were sent in one direction?

**Lou:** Some of them went straight to the gas chamber.

**Judge:** And well, did they decide in some way? Wasn't there any questioning or any interviews?

**Lou:** There was no questioning, no interviews. They just looked here, here, here. At that time Auschwitz was a very busy place because the transports were coming in those trains. Thousands of people came in each train, and they probably had a hundred people in each boxcar and forty or fifty boxcars to each train. They were exterminating as many as twelve to fifteen thousand people in twenty-four hours. They did not play around. Everything was fast. Whatever we did was no fast enough for them.

**Judge:** When they told your mother to go on one way and you to go the other—that was the last time you ever saw your mother?

**Lou:** That was the last time I saw my mother.

**Judge:** As far as you know, she went straight to the gas chamber?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** What about your...

**Lou:** I spoke with my sister, and she doesn't want to talk about what exactly happened. The details she does not care to talk about.

**Judge:** What about your father—what happened to him?

**Lou:** My father was separated from us, and he was murdered in either Auschwitz or Buna.

**Judge:** And what happened to you? Tell us what happened to you.

**Lou:** We were marched on top of a huge pile of clothing, and we were told to undress. And we inquired, "What happened to the people who once wore this clothing?" We were told they went through the chimney. That was the expression—if someone was cremated, or whatever, they were going through the chimney.

**Judge:** So what happened? Did you take off all of your clothes?

**Lou:** We took off all of our clothes. They picked out the strong, young men, and they took them to the sonderkommando. The sonderkommando were those that carried the bodies from the gas chambers to the pits, where they burned them, or the crematoria, and they had to work under a very fast tempo.

**Judge:** They picked out certain young men?

**Lou:** Strong ones. The strong ones, the strong ones.

**Judge:** The strong ones, and their jobs were what?

**Lou:** That's what they did. They dragged the bodies from the gas chambers to the crematoria or to the fire pits.

**Judge:** Did you see this happening?

**Lou:** Yes it was right there.

**Judge:** And then what happened to you?

**Lou:** We went into a barrack next, and all the hair was clipped off from the body, and we were put in a barrack in Birkenau.



**Judge:** Birkenau.

**Lou:** Birkenau, that's right next door. It's part of Auschwitz. Actually, they call it Auschwitz II.

**Judge:** Where were the gas chambers? Were they at Auschwitz or were they at Birkenau?

**Lou:** Most of them were in Birkenau. The biggest slaughter-place was Birkenau.

**Judge:** But there were there also gas chambers at Auschwitz?

**Lou:** Yes, there were some in Auschwitz, but most were in Birkenau.

**Judge:** As I understand it, you were taken to Birkenau, right?

**Lou:** Yes, we were in Birkenau.

**Judge:** Is that about a mile or so away?

**Lou:** Yeah, a short walk from where we were.

**Judge:** And when you were in Birkenau, where were you placed there? What happened?

**Lou:** We were in Birkenau in a barrack, and across from our fence was the Gypsy camp, the Sygona Lager, as it was called in German. Today they were here, and the next morning they were all gone.

**Judge:** So these Gypsies were also in a concentration camp?

**Lou:** Yes, they were right across the fence from us in Birkenau.

**Judge:** Alright.

**Lou:** At that time.

**Judge:** So tell us. Continue. What happened at Birkenau?

**Lou:** In Birkenau, we were in those barracks. We were on quarantine. We were told we were going to be gassed because we were not tattooed. So we were going to be gassed several days later. We were taken to the railroad.

**Judge:** To the railroad in Auschwitz?

**Lou:** To the railroad in Auschwitz.

**Judge:** You were never taken into a gas chamber yourself in Auschwitz?

**Lou:** Not in Auschwitz. Not in Auschwitz.

**Judge:** Did anyone ever tell you why they were doing this to you?

**Lou:** They did not. The only thing was that it was well-known and self-understood because we were Jewish.

**Judge:** That's all that you knew.

**Lou:** That's all now. When they took us to the railroad the second time, there was a big change. There were no children, no elderly people, and no sick people. Only strong young men...

**Judge:** Like yourself?

**Lou:** Within a certain well...

**Judge:** You were seventeen or eighteen at the time?

**Lou:** I was eighteen at the time. Yes. Let's say they probably had people from seventeen to eighteen years old on up to forty.

**Judge:** And am I correct in saying that those mothers and children and sick people all went through the gas chamber?

**Lou:** At that time they were all gone. Yeah, they were all cremated at that time, and some of us envied them because we thought that they were all done and over. We thought that they were better off than we were.

**Judge:** Did you ever see your father there?

**Lou:** I have never seen my father.

**Judge:** How about your sister?

**Lou:** My sister—I saw her after we were liberated, and several months after the war ended we found her.

**Judge:** Your brother—what happened to him?

**Lou:** My brother was together with me all the time.

**Judge:** So your brother was with you. And then your brother went into the boxcar with...

**Lou:** Yes, off we go from Auschwitz locked in the boxcars, and we were traveling day and night.

**Judge:** When were you at Auschwitz during this period of time? By the way, how long were you there before you left?

**Lou:** It was probably several days—maybe a couple of weeks. Some were. I can not recall or say exactly how many days—probably a couple of weeks or less.

**Judge:** Were you put to work? Did you do any work there?

**Lou:** No, no work we did not work in Birkenau.

**Judge:** What did you do there?

**Lou:** Well just in the barracks. We could only go to the toilet once every twenty-four hours. If somebody had to do it in between, they were in trouble.

**Judge:** Were you fed?

**Lou:** Some, very little. We were given some water. It wasn't even warm but dyed dark. It looked like tea, but it was not tea or coffee or anything like that water.

**Judge:** Did you receive any type of medical treatment?

**Lou:** No medical treatments at all. Nobody even talked about medical treatments.

**Judge:** Did anyone ever try to escape?

**Lou:** People tried to escape—not from our group, but they did try to escape, yes.

**Judge:** What happened?

**Lou:** They were not very successful. Only a few were successful in escaping from Auschwitz.

**Judge:** So when you left Auschwitz in the boxcar, where did you go?

**Lou:** We didn't know where we were going. The last stop was Mauthausen in Austria.

**Judge:** That's a town in Austria?

**Lou:** A town in Austria. Mauthausen, called Mauthausen.

**Judge:** How long was that trip from Auschwitz to Mauthausen?

**Lou:** Also several days and nights.

**Judge:** There were just young men in the boxcar?

**Lou:** Only young men. Young men I think—young men, yes.

**Judge:** Did they ever tell you why you were going to Mauthausen?

**Lou:** No, they did not.

**Judge:** And who guarded you?

**Lou:** We were guarded by German SS in uniforms.

**Judge:** In uniforms?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** And what happened when you got to Mauthausen?

**Lou:** Mauthausen is a camp on top of a hill. There were steps. There were close to two hundred steps there to go up—liked 190 steps. And we had to run up. Those who could not run fell down, and they were stepped on, so some of us made it up there, and some of us did not.

**Judge:** It's hard for me to understand. You said you had to run?

**Lou:** Yes, because we were chased.

**Judge:** Who chased you?

**Lou:** The Germans. The SS.

**Judge:** Chased you with what?

**Lou:** With the dogs, with the sticks—sticking bayonets in our ribs.

**Judge:** So they made you run up these steps?

**Lou:** Run up those steps.

**Judge:** Were there any women with you then?

**Lou:** No, no women there. Only just those men that left from Auschwitz.

**Judge:** Okay, then what happened?

**Lou:** Well Auschwitz was very famous or infamous—whichever way you want to label it. They were famous for torture, extermination...

**Judge:** Just tell us what happened to you first.

**Lou:** We were put into—the whole group was—put into quarantine.

**Judge:** What do you mean by that: in a room or in a building?

**Lou:** In a barrack.

**Judge:** Were you told what was going to happen to you?

**Lou:** We were told we were going to be gassed.

**Judge:** Who told you that?

**Lou:** The blockaltester.

**Judge:** Did he tell you when?

**Lou:** No, no just that we were going to be gassed. In the mean time, night came around, and he said everybody is going to sleep, and every one of us will take up this much room (He holds up his hands to show the space between his thumb and index finger). We didn't know what he was talking about. And he knew that, so he goes like this and this (He touches his left shoulder and right hip). Of course we had to sleep like this (He puts his hands one behind the other). He said "like Portugal sardines." We had somebody else's feet in our faces. And you couldn't just turn around just on your side. You had to stay straight.

**Judge:** So you understand that while you were in that barrack, you were going to be taken to a gas chamber?

**Lou:** That's what we were told.

**Judge:** Did you see crematoria there?

**Lou:** No, no didn't see it from the place where we were. We didn't see it.

**Judge:** Did you hear that people were being gassed there?

**Lou:** Oh yeah, that was going on there all of the time.

**Judge:** What did you hear? What did they tell you?

**Lou:** They didn't tell us when, or how, or what. They told us we were going to be gassed. And we were taken to the gas chamber.

**Judge:** And you were still with your brother?

**Lou:** Yes—with my brother, and the whole group was taken at the same time.

**Judge:** How was your brother? How was he taking all of this?

**Lou:** Well he seemed to be a little stronger than I.

**Judge:** What do you mean by that?

**Lou:** He held up a little better than I. I wanted to commit suicide. So we were taken into the gas chamber. The doors locked, and nothing happened.

**Judge:** And this was at Mauthausen?

**Lou:** That was Mauthausen.

**Judge:** And you were put into a gas chamber?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** What was the gas chamber like? Describe it.

**Lou:** It is just a room like any other room, like a hall, and there were even...

**Judge:** Like the room you're in now?

**Lou:** Like the room—yes, it could be if you close this hermetically, and you drop Cyclone B. This is a gas chamber.

**Judge:** You understood that you were going into that room to be gassed?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** And how many people were with you?

**Lou:** I don't know how many—probably several hundred. I don't know how many fit in that room at that time. Maybe one hundred at a time or one hundred fifty; maybe two hundred.

**Judge:** It was crowded.

**Lou:** Yes, crowded, yes.

**Judge:** And you're all just waiting to die?

**Lou:** All waiting. We didn't know what we were waiting for.

**Judge:** But you were told you were going to be gassed?

**Lou:** Yeah, we were told we were going to be gassed, but nothing happening.

**Judge:** Did anyone try to fight against it? Or be against it in any way?

**Lou:** No, we had no strength to fight or anything, or...no, no.

**Judge:** Then when you're in the gas chamber, then you're still with your brother?

**Lou:** Yes, we were still...

**Judge:** And were the doors closed?

**Lou:** The doors were locked. From the outside.

**Judge:** And what happened?

**Lou:** We were there, and a few minutes later—I don't know how many—it was five or ten or fifteen or twenty minutes, I can not judge—the doors opened up. Everybody ran out in a hurry quickly to the Appelplatz.

**Judge:** And nothing happened?

**Lou:** No, no, so we went out to the Appelplatz, and the commander of the camp said that the fuel to burn our bodies is too expensive—that he would send us to a place where we are going to vanish without any cost to the Third Reich.

**Judge:** Well did he tell you what he meant by that?

**Lou:** No, just simple language.

**Judge:** So then tell us what happened?

**Lou:** Well we were given numbers: a metal plate number, one here (left wrist), and one here (left chest), and one here (right thigh). My group was the size of sixty-eight thousand. My number is 68,122. My brother's number is 68,123. We were taken to the railroad. Off we go.

**Judge:** By the way did you keep those metal plates?

**Lou:** I still have that metal plate.

**Judge:** With your number on it?

**Lou:** Yes, I do have the original metal number. Yes.

**Judge:** So tell us what happened next.

**Lou:** We were taken to the railroad. Off we go—the last stop was at a new place where a camp was being built.

**Judge:** What was the name of that camp?

**Lou:** Ebensee.

**Judge:** That was nearby?

**Lou:** That was a branch of Mauthausen. It was probably, maybe fifty miles or something from Mauthausen.

**Judge:** Alright.

**Lou:** We were transported there by train.

**Judge:** Again, did they tell you why they were moving you to Ebensee?

**Lou:** They never shared any information with us at all. It was just, “you do this quickly and in a hurry,” and if you don’t do it fast enough, you were beat, or the dogs grabbed your legs, or whatever.

**Judge:** You said that you were on the verge of committing suicide.

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** Did you ever try to commit suicide?

**Lou:** I tried to figure out how to do it yes. And I figured the best thing was to throw myself in front of a train when the train comes. But it was not so easy—the facilities were not there.

**Judge:** Did you talk to your brother about this?

**Lou:** No, once a little bit I talked to him about it, and he detected it. I also tried to put it on the scale of not committing suicide, for I would be working and making bullets that would kill me. If I commit suicide, I will violate the commandment “thou shall not kill.” So I couldn’t come to a real decision. I had problems making the real decision.

**Judge:** So you’re at Ebensee now?

**Lou:** Yes, we are at Ebensee.

**Judge:** And that’s in Austria correct?

**Lou:** It’s in Austria.



**Judge:** Austria.

**Lou:** Correct.

**Judge:** And this is still the year of...

**Lou:** 1944.

**Judge:** We're still in the year 1944.

**Lou:** 1944—we're still in the year 1944. In the summer time—late summer.

**Judge:** And what happens in Ebensee?

**Lou:** Ebensee was a very bad place. Conditions were hard there: starvation, beatings, and torture.

**Judge:** Why do you say that? What's your basis for saying that?

**Lou:** Because that's what was going on there.

**Judge:** Did you see it?

**Lou:** I felt it because they were beating me or my next door neighbor—whoever they were beating us.

**Judge:** What do you mean when you say they were beating you?

**Lou:** Okay...

**Judge:** How?

**Lou:** We had to work in the daytime in the Steinbruch, which were the underground factories, and in the nighttime we were building the camp because the camp was just being built.

**Judge:** That was at Ebensee?

**Lou:** Yes, and they were hitting us with the roots from the trees. Just picked up the roots and hitting everyone anywhere.

**Judge:** Hitting you to do what?

**Lou:** To work faster.

**Judge:** And what kind of work were you doing?

**Lou:** We were cleaning the place, so they could put up the barracks. And then we had to build a crematorium because there were already bodies lying around.

**Judge:** And you saw those bodies?

**Lou:** Yes, they were right there.

**Judge:** So these were dead bodies?

**Lou:** Dead bodies.

**Judge:** From the crematorium lying around?

**Lou:** Lying around.

**Judge:** Someone had to come and take them away?

**Lou:** We had to build a crematorium, so they could be cremated.

**Judge:** How did that feel? How did it feel that they were going to make you build a crematorium to kill other Jews?

**Lou:** They kept us under conditions where we had no time to think about what was going on. We were demoralized and dehumanized. To give you an example of the torture, the commander of the camp had specially trained dogs to attack inmates. So you take a group of inmates and get the dogs after them. The dogs were tearing them apart, and we had to look at them, and we were told, "This is what happens to people who don't obey." They hung people and said, "This is what happens to people that try to escape." So they kept us scared all the time.

**Judge:** Just a minute—I am sorry to make you recount this, but I want everyone to know what actually happened. You said they showed your people being torn apart.

**Lou:** Yes, yes—we had to look at them.

**Judge:** What did you see? What did you look at?

**Lou:** The dogs attacking the group. One was tearing here (He points towards the left), and one was tearing here (He points towards the right).

**Judge:** They tore a body apart?

**Lou:** Yes. They tore their clothes and their bodies, and they bit them.

**Judge:** And then you said you saw people hung?

**Lou:** Yes, They hung them.

**Judge:** How many did you see hung?

**Lou:** Several—maybe six, eight, ten lined up, and they said, “this is what happens to people that try to escape.”

**Judge:** So what happened next? What did you do?

**Lou:** Well, we still had to go to work. As I say, they worked us day and night. If you work in the day time here (He points to the left), you work in the nighttime over there (He points to the right). Starvation was bad. We were freezing in the winter time, and as we got closer to winter, we didn’t have the proper clothes or proper shoes. We had wooden clogs. The bottoms of our feet were frost bitten, where they got blistered. We still had to go to work the way we were.

**Judge:** You worked day and night. Is that right?

**Lou:** They worked us all the hours that they possibly could.

**Judge:** Were there any women there?

**Lou:** No women there. No women inmates. No, no, no.

**Judge:** Alright and how long did this go on?

**Lou:** It goes on and on, day after day, week after week. At that time, they didn’t need any more crematoria or gas chambers because there were dead bodies all over. Starvation was so bad that cannibalism became stylish. I myself, like many others, became what they called a “musselman”—no flesh and no muscles on the body, and no desire to live. So we were hauled off to piles by the crematorium.

**Judge:** How much did you weigh then?

**Lou:** I can not estimate how many pounds—but there were no muscles, no flesh. I could not even stand up. I was not the only one. We were put on piles of those who had already been dead for a number of days.

**Judge:** What part of the year was it when you were put on these piles?

**Lou:** This...

**Judge:** Was that ’44 or already ’45?

**Lou:** This was already springtime of ’45.

**Judge:** So you had stayed at Ebensee doing this work?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** From '44 until the spring of '45.

**Lou:** Yes, until May when we were liberated.

**Judge:** Until May of '45.

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** You just said something, and I want you to describe it for us. You said you were placed on a pile?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** Of bodies?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** Of corpses?

**Lou:** Yes, dead bodies.

**Judge:** How big was this pile?

**Lou:** Huge. There was more than one pile—there were several piles—but they were huge. They just piled them up one on top of the other. Some were dying, and some were already dead.

**Judge:** Some of the bodies were moving?

**Lou:** Some were moving up, yes.

**Judge:** Were they saying anything? Were they crying out?

**Lou:** They were crying. They didn't even care to live any longer. This is what they call a "muscle man"—where you have no more desire to live. For what? What for?

**Judge:** And your brother was still with you?

**Lou:** No, my brother was in the camp, but he was not around there. He knew that I was taken there.

**Judge:** Did you and your brother ever try to help each other and give each other some emotional support?

**Lou:** My brother helped me quite a bit.

**Judge:** How did he help you?

**Lou:** If not for him I would not be here today.

**Judge:** How did he help you?

**Lou:** At one time he had it a little easier because he was in a different Steinbruch, and he shared some of his food with me.

**Judge:** How did he do that? Was he allowed to do that?

**Lou:** Well, if we met at a certain time. He made it his business to meet with me. At times, I didn't want to take it from him because I was worried we both would die.

**Judge:** Did you see other family relationships, like father and son, and so forth?

**Lou:** Yes, there were fathers and sons, and the father would say to his son, "Well my stomach is hurting me. Here, you take the little food I have received." He gave it to his son just to make sure that the son would survive. The father didn't care about himself. But he worried about his son. So he gave him his food hoping he would survive. Just like my brother did with me—he gave me some food.

**Judge:** So you worked through the winter of '44 and '45.

**Lou:** Yes, correct.

**Judge:** And you're doing the same kind of work all the time right?

**Lou:** Well no, I was placed in different places. I worked in the Steinbruch. I worked in the smaller Steinbruch. I worked in Autobrookhime (?).

**Judge:** What happened if you didn't want to work? What happened if you got sick or something like that?

**Lou:** If somebody did not get out to the Appelplatz in order to go to work, they took them to the crematorium. They took them in Ebensee because they had a special hospital for the Jewish, which they called the "Yiddish Yerden." And in there it was a slaughter-house. Whoever went in there never got out. It was a slaughter-house. They called it a hospital, but it was a slaughter-house.

**Judge:** And tell us now about the time you were placed on this pile of bodies.

**Lou:** At that time, the American Army was getting closer to the camp. The commander of the camp got on the loud speakers and made an announcement for everybody to go into those

underground tunnels, where we were safe because the American Army was going to bombard. They were going to shoot their machine guns. So for those who were able to get into those tunnels to save their lives, they made sure to go in there. But what he didn't tell us was that he had everything mined with dynamite and other explosives. They even pulled up a locomotive to the main opening of the camp, which was also the same as the exit. A locomotive filled with dynamite—all he had to do was push the button, and of those of us in there would die. At that time, the camp was holding around twenty-five thousand people. All he had to do was push the button, and everybody would be buried alive, and no one would ever know what happened.

**Judge:** So what happened? You were placed on this pile of bodies right?

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** And you knew the Americans were coming?

**Lou:** I didn't know.

**Judge:** You didn't know?

**Lou:** You had no word like that? I didn't know.

**Lou:** I didn't know. No, I didn't know.

**Judge:** They took you and just placed you on this pile of...

**Lou:** Many of us—hundreds and hundreds.

**Judge:** And you were placed on the top?

**Lou:** Yeah—well whoever was the last one was on top.

**Judge:** Were you dying at the time?

**Lou:** Yes, yes if this would have lasted for another two or three hours, I would not have survived, and I didn't care. I didn't want to survive anymore.

**Judge:** So what happened? Tell us what happened.

**Lou:** Well, the American Army liberated the camp. That was May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945. My brother came looking for me, and he shook me and said that the American Army liberated the camp. I couldn't figure out what he was saying, so he said, I saw them with my own eyes!

**Judge:** You were on these bodies at the time?

**Lou:** Yes, I was still on that pile.

**Judge:** Your brother came over to talk to you?

**Lou:** Yes!

**Judge:** And did you somehow get off the pile?

**Lou:** Yes, I got off the pile. He pulled me off, and he told me that the American Army liberated the camp. He told me that he saw them with his own eyes—those are Americans, and we will get something to eat, and we will be free to go home. He even told me that he went on top of an American tank that had come into the camp and stepped on it to make sure that I believed him.

**Judge:** So how did that make you feel?

**Lou:** Well at that time I didn't try to think about it, but looking back, I said to myself, "Where the world was I, and where was mankind?"

**Judge:** And the Americans came?

**Lou:** The Americans came.

**Judge:** You were saved? Is that right?

**Lou:** We were saved, and we were taken to Linz.

**Judge:** That's a town in Austria right?

**Lou:** Yeah, a town in Austria. And from Linz on to Prague, and we were put into a hospital called the Podoli Sanatorium. They tried to cure us, and they told us just to eat what they gave us because some of us died from eating. Eating too much or too fast or whatever. So they cured me and many others. Of course I went back there fifty years later to tell them thank you.

**Judge:** And eventually did you come to America?

**Lou:** Yes, eventually I went to America.

**Judge:** Thank you.

**Lou:** The best country in the world.

**Judge:** After eight months of collecting evidence, the first Nuremberg war crimes trial was held. The trial of the main twenty-one came to an end. The judges representing the four Allied nations found eighteen of the twenty-one guilty. Three were acquitted. Eleven were sentenced to death by hanging, but only ten were hanged. One man Herman Goering, second-in-command to Adolf Hitler, cheated the gallows by committing suicide. When they went to get him in his cell that night they found him dead from a cyanide pill he had somehow smuggled into his cell. And now fifty-five years later one may well ask, "Well what did the Nuremberg Trials achieve? Are they

of any value today? Did they stop war?" Well no. Of course not. Did they stop the atrocities of war? No they didn't do that either. We know that from countries like Cambodia and Iraq and Rwanda and now Kosovo. They didn't stop the atrocities. But they were still of great value. They were a triumph of good over evil. They brought to justice the worst criminals in history. They showed that the rule of law could be applied to punish, if not prevent, war crimes, and they set an ethical standard for all war crimes—a standard of justice and due process. And they set a rule that for all courts everywhere—a simple rule—but so important that no matter how heinous the crime charged may be, the accused is entitled to a fair trial. And the trial showed how low a richly and highly civilized nation can sink under ruthless leadership. And they prevented those war criminals from becoming martyrs, which they would have done had there been no trial. And something else—one other thing—they did something that's very important to people like Lou Dunst. I have read from reliable studies that up to twenty percent of Americans still do not believe that the Holocaust ever occurred. That the murder of six million Jews was a myth. Well the record at the Nuremberg Trials stands forever. The record is bold and clear of what the Nazis' did—for all to see. And had there been no trial that figure of twenty percent who still do not believe might well be higher. Before I close I would like to ask Mr. Dunst just one more question, not as lawyer to witness, but just as man to man.

**Judge:** Mr. Dunst...

**Lou:** Yes.

**Judge:** There is one more question I would like to ask of you.

**Lou:** Yes?

**Judge:** You are a religious man?

**Lou:** Yes, I am religious.

**Judge:** A religious Jew?

**Lou:** A very religious Jew.

**Judge:** You have a strong belief in God?

**Lou:** Very much so.

**Judge:** You have always attended synagogue. Right?

**Lou:** And I always will attend.

**Judge:** Let me ask you this.

**Lou:** Yes?



**Judge:** In those darkest days at Auschwitz and Mauthausen, particularly that last day when you were lying on top of that pile of bodies, some dead and some dying, and you felt that you were dying yourself, did you ever wonder if God had forsaken you?

**Lou:** God has never forsaken me. He was always there. We were dying—many of us. Those were the darkest and saddest of days in this story of mankind.

**Judge:** Did it ever shake your belief though? Whether God existed or not?

**Lou:** My belief changed from better to better, from strong to stronger, and it does continue to change to this day.

**Judge:** And nothing you saw, nothing you experienced in any way shook that belief?

**Lou:** No, it never did. Not in me, and not in many others. For thousands of others, even the atheists started to pray to God.

**Lou:** Thank you.

**End of Testimony. Follow-up:**

Judge Norbert Ehrenfreund has been a Superior Court Judge for 25 years and is still active on the Bench.

Photograph of Lou and his father

Lou Dunst lives in San Diego, and is a successful real estate broker.

Second photograph of Lou and his father

Lou speaks before various civic groups and schools on the Holocaust.

Photograph of a group of kids with a box around Lou Dunst

Judge Ehrenfreund, at times, joins Lou Dunst with his presentation on the Holocaust.

Photograph of Lou Dunst's metal ID number from Mauthausen