Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 1

Abraham Klausner interview 2/14/95

SWB: Rabbi Klausner, can you tell me about the first time

that you came ... opened the concentration camps, and what

were the impressions you had and what effect on you did it

have?

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: My um particular experience was to

enter the Dachau concentration camp in 45, May of 45, I was

attached to a hospital unit called the 116th evacuation

hospital. I was given no instruction as to what I would do

nor did anybody advise me. I just found myself with the

medical team in the camp. And the, I had to determine what

I was to do, and that of course was a development which

began with my coming and lasted with a period of

practically, approximately five years.

SWB: You told once about how difficult for you to actually

go up and enter the camp, can you tell me about that?

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well my first experience with uh the

liberated was terribly devastating, by virtue of the fact

that I realized that they weren't liberated. The camps were

open so to speak, but the people weren't uh taken in hand

and uh comforted and provided with necessities and told that

now you'll have a place to sleep, things to do and they'll

be a program of some sort for your uh repatriation or

delivery to-to-to uh some security, what they were do- what

was done was they were put back behind barbed wire. They uh

occupied more or less the same uh ambience that they uh

occupied uh before the liberation, with the exception of

course, they weren't going to be killed. And they were

going to be fed. Dachau was an exception in the sense that

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 2

they were also going to be taken care of medically. We had

uh three medical units, the 116th, the 127th evac, and the

tenth field hospital which was nearby at another camp called

Allach. And for a short period of time, oh perhaps uh four

to six weeks maybe a little longer, the hospital units uh

drawn from the military, remained in the area taking care of

the immediate problems of the uh sick and the dying.

SWB: Tell me about first going through the gate and then

going into a barrack for the first time.

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well I came uh into Dachau at night uh,

and uh I saw nothing except the main square coming through

the big gates. And of course uh I waited for the morning

quite anxiously and when morning came uh I uh walked through

the barbed wire gates into the barracks area, and uh

selected one of the barracks. I entered and there met the

first of the survivors. Uh it was a uh difficult experience

for me because I was not confident that uh I could serve a

purpose. I had nothing to offer, I had nothing to give.

People needed amenities, needed attention of various kinds,

and I had nothing, but nevertheless there I was in Dachau

and I felt I had to do something, and so I entered the

barracks and stood there, terribly disturbed. Here we were

in a period of liberation and the people were still in

barracks, stretched out on shelves, there were three rows of

shelves, nothing other than the shelves, there wasn't a-a-a-

piece of linen of any kind, there wasn't a bar of soap,

there wasn't a chair, place to sit down, it was just a uh, a

uh dirty uh-uh situation and uh here were the people uh

either stretched out on the shelves or uh moving about

listlessly. Paid no attention to me as if I didn't exist.

No one came towards me to say welcome or uh what is it you

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 3

want. They just uh, I was just an apparition. Until one

uh, one uh of the liberated, of the survivors walking around

came, stared at me and finally looked up at me and uh, asked

me a strange question. I remember it very distinctly. He

asked me if I knew his uncle, gave me his name, in Toledo.

And I was taken aback, that was the first conversation that

I had with the, with the liberated. And I stood there lost,

not knowing what to do or what to say. I was wearing a

raincoat at the time and in my pocket I had little

cellophane packages of Bizouzot, they were these little uh

uh symbols uh that the Jewish welfare board had made and

delivered to chaplains for distribution to soldiers and for

a moment I thought I would take out a few of these and hand

them out. But as I thought about it I thought that would be

ugly, it would be to-to-to to respond to a great tragedy

with a little icon of some sort didn't s-seem to be the

proper thing to do. And then I was saved. I call it the

epiphany. A voice came from one of the uh, one of the

shelves, very thin voice, crying so to speak, and uh it said

to me, I had a brother, we grew up together in our village

but my brother left and went to the United States and there

became a Rabbi. And he continued to speak but at that

point, uh, when he said he became a Rabbi, I interrupted him

and said I know your brother. He is here in Europe. And

then the voice began again to cry and say, don't be

compassionate for the sake of compassion, he assumed that I

was just going to be nice, uh, but it was uh, a strange

moment. I said no uh, my voice over his uh, I'm gonna bring

you your brother. And I left the barracks at that moment

because I couldn't handle it beyond that. And uh, on the

outside of the barrack, I now felt that there was a purpose

in my coming, if nothing more, I was gonna bring him his

brother. Of course people ask me, when I tell the story,

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 4

how did you come to this uh, this moment. Well I traveled

with 250 officers uh, in the United States to Scotland,

England, across the channel, we were in box cars across

France, in the back of the bulge in the Battle of the Bulge,

and that voice, the lilt in that voice I had heard it

before, and to me there was no question about it, and-and

and I was so familiar with the rhythm, the lilt of the

voice, that I immediately assumed that the voice that I

heard in the boxcar, n- in the travels, was it the brother.

And uh it turned out I was correct, I uh, found the brother

and I brought them together. This was my first, not only

experience, it was the thing that uh, that uh encouraged me

to an odyssey that stretched over uh the four or five years

working with the displaced persons.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: No uh, first of all uh, I saw it only

from the so-called area of Dachau. I didn't know what was

happening beyond the gates of Dachau at the moment. Uh, I

was confident in those days that it wasn't really a serious

problem, the sick were being taken care of by the 116th

evac. And uh I knew, I was confident that the next day or

two or three days that all the great American institutions,

especially the Jewish institutions would be there. And uh

they would do what had to be done to-to-to give these people

the redemption that should have been offered them.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well when uh the-the-the question that

this-this figure asked me about his uncle in Toledo bothered

me. I just didn't dismiss it. And I began to think about

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 5

it and I realized that it wasn't really a-a question, it was

a prayer. Uh, the man wanted to be connected with life

again, with a relative, so uh, that started me off on the

project which became known as the Sheritaplaytom[?]. I-I

immediately walked out of one section of-of the camp where,

into another, and I got a hold of some of the um, the

survivors that were walking around and I said, we got to

start listing the names of uh who has survived, and we-we

established a formula, we would get the name, date and place

of birth, and the fact that they are presently...

[CAMERA RELOAD]

[CR#2]

SWB: Can you tell me about religious ceremonies for the

survivors early on, do you remember any instances where

people prayed....

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: I uh, wasn't uh, aware of uh a

religious uh factor playing a role in the sense of ritual or

things of that sort uh. Uh there were little moments which

were of a religious nature uh that I was involved with but

uh, it didn't seem to be something that had to be

represented uh, assuming that it was felt. For example, I

had decided that we would have a, uh a kind of a

Thanksgiving service at one of the camps, uh, in Munich, at

the edge of Munich. And uh I had a case of uh prayer books,

the JWB, the Jewish Welfare Board prayer book that was

prepared for soldiers, and I came and there was a big

assembly of survivors, and uh we passed out the prayer

books, and when the service began, there wasn't a prayer

book in sight, it completely disappeared. I didn't

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 6

understand then at the moment what was happening but later

of course it all became clear to me. The, there were

moemtns which were ritually connected, which spoke about

religious practice. I could tell you the story of uh, of

some women that I had found in the Alps. I was on my way to

Italy because uh, we were going to establish a kind of a,

escape route, of getting survivors over to Italy where they

would be able to take the illegal ships to Palestine. And

on my way, traveling with a doctor, always traveled with a

doctor, I hit upon a sign that indicated that in one of the

valleys of the Alps, there were some DP's. So we made that

trip, it was a difficult trip, we finally came to the end of

the valley actually, and uh found a series of barracks, and

entered one in which there were quite a number of Hungarian

Jewish women. And we were the first uh to connect with them

in terms of the world Jewish community and these women. And

it was my practice of course to carry lists of names in my

pocket, and I pulled out all the lists and I put em on the

table and they all fell on the table, starting to scratch

for the names to see if they could connect with one of the

names. And while this was going on, a young girl, I don't

know, maybe 16 or 17, walked out of this area of this room

and returned in a little while with a prayer book. I didn't

know it was a prayer book at the moment. And then she held

it up from the distance and said see what I have. It's my

prayer book. And then she added to that, I brought it from

the ghetto. Of course this, [laughs] this was a kind of

excitement because I knew the procedure by this time, that

you couldn't take anything into, in-into a concentration

camp. [coughs] People were stripped of any possessions they

had and there was no way of carrying a prayer book into a

camp and uh holding onto it, and I of course asked, how did

you do it, and she told me that when they gave her her first

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 7

allocation of bread, they gave her a heel of a loaf, and she

cut or tore a slice but not completely, made a hinge of it.

And then dug out the crumbs in the heel of a loaf of the

bread, and put her little prayer book and carried the bread

with her and of course bread was something you weren't going

to, you weren't going to steal one from the other, and so

forth. Y- this was one of the religious elements in terms

of uh, uh then of course in time uh, as people settled in

the camps, they took on their uh religious practices, and I

dealt with them accordingly. The Klausenberg Rabbi, the

great Hassidic leader whom I found in Dachau, we nourished

him back to health and then brought him to Feldafing, he had

some disciples, and so we have a whole history with him. I

found uh in one of the uh, buildings, in Munich, a large uh-

uh Polish Hebrew library that the Nazis had uh had uh

confiscated. And every time I would pass the building, I'd

go in and take a few of the volumes and then on my way to

one of the camps I would drop them off so that the people

who were interested uh, would have uh, have the text of the

tradition in front of them. Uh, religion didn't play a-a

dominant role in the sense that we were doing things

religiously. Religion manifested itself in terms of the

behavior of the people as they related to the faith prior to

their coming into the camp and uh, whatever the camp uh

would uh allow them.

SWB: Tell me your impressions of the problems that existed

in most of the DP camps very early on. Describe the

conditions.

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: The camps, to begin with, were not

Jewish camps. They were collecting points. Other words,

Dachau was liberated and uh the people in Dachau were in

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 8

Dachau. Now the Feldafing camp which was uh south of

Dachau, came about because when the American forces came

through the area, particularly the community of Tutzing,

they found this company of survivors, that is of DP's, that

the Germans were moving from one place to the other to get

them away from the oncoming allied forces. But by the time

uh the Americans got there the Germans have fled and the

people were there. And now it became the job of Army to do

something with them, so they assigned an officer and said,

do something with them. And they ended up in what we call

an SDAP school, this was a school uh that uh-uh that trained

the children of the elite, Nazis, for positions, for

positions in-in-in in the party and in the government. And

so these people were then pushed into this camp, same thing

happened in Landsberg, a series of camps called the

Kalfering camps. Uh, same thing happened in Mithenwald, and

we had wherever we went there were these collecting points,

and each one was handled differently depended upon who was

handling it, there wasn't a general policy, there wasn't a

program, there wasn't an, a department within the military

to say we're going to take care of these people. There

wasn't an institution, the UNRHA wasn't there, the American

Joint Distribution Committee wasn't there, no one was there.

And so it became a makeshift operation and depending upon

the officer in charge, you'd get either a better or a worse

situation. But the camp itself was really incapable because

of, to handle the people and so you had a kind of a, tragic

uh, uh I wouldn't call it poverty but absence of any uh

sensible response to the people that had suddenly been

liberated, and that became one of the first problems.

Secondly, the fact that they were locked up, barbed wire,

they couldn't they had no freedom, couldn't get out one in

the morning and say I'm going to take a walk through the,

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 9

through- through the village, or the countryside. Uh, they

had no name, no name was allowed them. They didn't have an

identity card. They were just a mass of people which the

army was gonna herd from one place to the other, and that

became the basic element with which we had to deal.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: The uh logic of the situation was not

something that that we debated or the people, the people uh-

uh reflected on. The people, uh, faced the problems of

their own connections, their own identity, and so that was

their primary concern. Uh, what was happening to the

perpetrators, the Germans and so forth, this really was not

something that we were, just about to-to-to waste our energy

on.

SWB:

[CAMERA RELOAD]

[CR#3]

SWB: Tell me also about the problem that existed early on

of mixed nationalities in the displaced persons camp, why

was that a problem.

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: The problem of the camps uh was in

terms of the mixture that the animosities between the groups

persisted even though they had in one form or another

commonly been oppressed by the Germans. Once the liberation

took place, old animosity surfaced, and some became quite

intense. And uh we would be faced with the reality that

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 10

from day to day people were actually killed, and uh, the

dead rose in number and uh, it was obvious to me that uh,

something had to be done. Secondly, in terms of the Jewish

survivor, I felt that in order to restructure a living

pattern and to uh uh excite some kind of a cultural

development or a return to a- a previous rhythm of life, we

couldn't do it in a mixture. There was no way of uh dealing

with one group and not dealing with another group. And uh I

wasn't prepared to serve other than a response to the Jewish

survivor. And so I decided that we're going to have to have

segregated or Jewish camps. And so I took the matter up

with some military figures and they were against it, but

eventually we devised a way in which they would not have to

take a position in favor of separate camps, and yet allow me

to create Jewish camps.

SWB: Did they simply not understand...

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: They were prompted by a, the general

American concept of uh of uh multiculturalism, in other

words, as one officer said to me, after all we're Americans,

we're we-we uh uh are proponents of democracy, of-of

containing people within a common objective. And here

you're coming and saying to, to us after the war which we

fought in terms of a democratic uh concept that you're going

to go back on it and you're gonna separate the people. And

I said theoretically, you're absolutely correct. But in

practice, it just won't work at this time and in this place.

And so uh, we were able to make a kind of a deal which I was

able to create, the camps.

SWB: Tell me about what length people would go to find

surviving members of their families.

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 11

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: The-the compulsion, or the drive was so

great that people broke out of camps and walked, traveled,

there weren't any forms of transportation across

Czechoslovakia, Poland, into Russia, looking for uh, for-for

uh, fragments of families, and people came out of East

Europe into Munich, and we set up a large tracing program.

Besides the-the books that were published uh we had a center

in Munich at the Deutschishe museum for, where people came

from all over Europe and uh, uh came asking about their

family. Interesting thing was that we put a table out in

the lobby, so to speak, people would come and tear the pages

out of the book and we would have to feed the table with

books and then we would nail the pages down so they would

last a little longer. But if a person came and found no

name in the book, they would go over to the wall, it was a

very large wall, and they write a note on the wall saying

for example, I was here, addressing it to a parent or to a

child. I've been looking for you, and I will be here or

going there so that there'd be some point at which they

might be able to connect. We were very much involved in

looking for children in uh Eastern Europe, people who had

left their children either with Christian friends or others.

Wanted to find those children and so we had to set up a

program for the search of children, which was haphazard but

in many cases it was very effective.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well uh, as I came to know the-the-the

contours of the problem and realized that Dachau was only

one little place, and that throughout Bavaria, there were

pockets of survivors and news came to me, military people

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 12

start coming to visit Dachau, and uh soldiers would meet me

and say I just came from, uh from uh, Eschwega, and uh there

are so many Jews there and say some words about them. Well

I pursued every one of those rumors. I would go to each one

of these places, find out who was there. Uh, I would then

inform them what their rights were, I would check and find

out what the food situation was. I would collect their

names and I would give them copies of other places that I

had already had. And slowly when I would come back to

Dachau I would then have some of the people join these names

to others, and uh after a while I went up to the town of

Landsberg and found uh a printer. It was not legal for

printers to operate after the war, you had to have military

permission, the military wasn't giving out permission for

any kind of uh printing of newspapers or anything of print

nature. And then with a cup of coffee, I mean a can of

coffee or tea or something, chocolate, cigarettes, which uh

these things were uh negotiables, we would get uh the books

published and then we'd have to distribute them. We'd get

people going to Poland to take some books, or to Hungary or

to Rumania and so forth. In fact, I had a man come from

Kobna, a Christian, who brought me a child. And with the

child he brought a page of the book, and in the book he said

here is the name of the father of this child. Handed me the

child and the page, and I w- returned the child to his

father. Uh, in time, after we left the Deutscheisch museum,

we-we were forced out of there, political situation was such

that we were in tension with each other, that is I and the

army. We moved to a building on Ziebertstrasse in Munich

and there opened a very broad and detailed search department

which became quite uh, quite an institution. People from

all over Europe came, left names, and there were follow-ups,

had a whole volunteer staff working, and out of that came

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 13

one of the Sheri Table Ta books, the last one. Which is a,

a compilation of all the names of all the books in that

final, and it was printed by the United States army.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: It was organized according to camps

first, the original books. Uh, the best that we could do at

that time was to get the name of the survivor, the place and

date of birth, this was about as much information that we

could handle and we though that would be at least some kind

of a resource which would help people locate one another.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: I uh, remember that very clearly. I

was driving into the camp of Feldafing, and whenever I drove

in, the people would congregate around the car as I came in,

so it would move very slowly, and they would shout to me all

kinds of things. Their complaints or just a general

greeting or something. It was a kind of a festival

situation when I came into a camp, and I came in one day and

there was a tall figure, angry looking like a prophet, and

he shouted out to me and he said Chaplain, we need a

newspaper, and my response of course was always positive. I

says, okay, you'll have a newspaper. Of course I had no

idea how you have a newspaper, but, if he wants a newspaper

let's see what can be done. And so I got to know this

person, he turned out to be uh a person from Kobne, his name

was Shalatin at the time, Levy, he had been a young

journalist and he had worked uh in uh as a journalist, and

uh, we then started to explore how we could uh publish a

newspaper. Well, we needed paper. That wasn't a big

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 14

problem because there was a paper mill in Dachau. And uh by

this time uh the com- new commanding officer of Dachau and I

were, were kind of uh, agreeable to each other. And uh we

worked together. And there were things that I could do for

him that he was unable to do. And so, when I made requests,

the command was uh, was responsive. So the paper wasn't a

problem. The question was the type. Uh, I wrote a [laughs]

a request to the American organizations for a Yiddish...

[CAMERA RELOAD]

[CR#4]

SWB: Okay, you're still telling me about the type.

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: The problem then came up about the

type. A rumor had come down from Frankfurt to the area that

somewhere in Frankfurt the Germans had hidden or salvaged or

kept, we don't know, some Hebrew or Yiddish type. So uh

Levy uh offered if I would provide for his transportation,

cause of a problem, he was a DP, he couldn't travel, he had

no identity, couldn't get out. And there was at that time

really no way of moving about. If I would get him to

Frankfurt somehow uh, uh he would pursue the rumor. And I

did, I put him on a military train with special orders and

he got to Frankfurt and he found a uh basically a handful of

type that the Germans for some reason had not destroyed.

And he brought it back and uh, we-we got a, printing

establishment uh where we could go to work and uh could only

set one page at a time of the newspaper and then had to

break it down and set the next page, until we got to be able

to uh, get additional type somewhere. And so the newspaper

began, we got the paper from Dachau, we got the type from uh

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 15

Frankfurt, and uh we were in business, and never missed a

week. Unterveg was published every week from the beginning

of uh og uh, well the end of uh 45 until uh, uh the whole

scene was uh closed down.

SWB: You must have somewhere in Europe when Ben-Gurion

came. Tell me where you were....

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well I was with Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion

uh came uh to-to Germany and uh he met with uh with-with uh

Eisenhower, uh, Judge Rifkin who was the advisor to Jewish

affairs took him to see Eisenhower and then uh he came down

to Munich and he, I joined him there, first he spoke, he was

the speaker at our uh-uh-uh call it uh convocation of the

central committee which met in the Rafthaus, the city hall

of Munich. And then I took him uh through the camp

situation, took him up to St. Tetillion, a hospital, up to

Landsberg, Feldafing, so forth. And uh just uh made sure

that he saw what uh we were all about.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well it of course meant a great deal in

the sense that uh, here was a figure, a personality which uh

which uh represented to them that there was a reality beyond

the camps, that there was a world and there was a, there was

a battle, and there was a voice, there was a-a promise that

uh as he indicated uh his theme was we're going to get you

out of this, there's going to be a land, and there's going

to be a new home. Uh, it uh, it was a tremendous

encouragement for the people whether they wanted to go to-to

the, then it was Palestine or later it'd become Israel or

not was immaterial. The same thing happened when the Jewish

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 16

brigade came through uh, uh Germany after all they were

Jews, they were in uniform, they were strong and proud,

expressive people and again they became a symbol for the

people more than anything else that uh these are our people,

and uh, uh we were going to be redeemed. I don't think the

people ever felt for a moment that this was going to end

badly, that uh somehow all this is nightmare which continued

after liberation is going to end. And here are our saviors.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well I didn't uh really disobey them, I

just didn't obey them. I didn't take an action against

anything. Now the first action that I took which was

contrary to a-a military order was that after uh, uh we were

in Dachau the first six or eight weeks, the 116th evacuation

hospital was ordered out, because actually this was not part

of uh military procedure, bringing a military hospital into

a civilian situation. But it was something that uh, that

the army decided to do as far as Dachau was concerned. But

uh, uh all other soldiers were on uh rest and recreation

except for these units, and so they tried to get them out as

quickly as possible, and the first unit that they ordered

out was the 116th for rest and recreation. I was a member

of the 116. Nobody paid attention to the fact that I had a

role that I created for myself, but the unit moves, you're

part of a unit, military orders, and so, bulletin board

announcnes, 16th is leaving, and told where it's going and

the following officers will be in the first unit. I was in

that unit. I did what the army told me, I got on a truck

that morning, and uh rode off. Came to a rest center,

everybody got off the truck, I stayed there a moment, I said

what am I gonna do here, this is not where I want to be. As

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 17

the last truck was turning around to go get the other

section of the 116th, I jumped back on the truck and went

back to Dachau. I got off the truck before truck g- entered

the camp, waited until the unit was gone, and then I walked

back into Dachau and said here I am. And continued to do

what I was doing.

SWB: But didn't you do that for a very long time?

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Oh yes, it went on for years, I kept

uh-uh, I kept dodging the uh, the uh instructions and uh

[cough] uh then of course I got involved in military policy

as to when the army under George Patton wanted to clear

munich out of uh out of uh DP's, I interfered. And I told

the DP's not to go. To stay, and that brought me in

conflict with the military uh structure and uh we had to uh

work this out. Sometimes we did it well and sometimes we

did it poorly, but I remained. And continued the battle.

SWB: Why?

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Well that's a difficult question to

answer, why. I was just, uh as a human being had just

committed myself heart and soul to this phenomenon. I had,

to me it was, there was no choice. Here was a world that

was in desperation and I came on the scene. Why, I don't

know, but I was there, and I wasn't going to leave it, and I

wasn't going to, going to permit the-the-the survivors the

Jews in particular to be treated the way the policy was

intent upon treating them.

[SYNC MARK 5]

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 18

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: The enormity of the problem was simply

in the fact, that here you had a people that was once a, a

an effective working, dreaming doing people, creative,

capable people, suddenly, torn from everything that

represented their humanity, and now that they were liberated

they weren't given back that humanity. They weren't

clothed, they weren't schooled, they weren't permitted to

travel, they weren't permitted to do anything, not to take

their name, their dignity, couldn't mail a letter to anyone,

even if they wanted to take the letter and give it to a

soldier, and say send this to my family in the United States

or in London or France, it was against the rules. You were

not allowed to connect, and what you're dealing with in this

period of liberation is a period of degradation, of keeping

this human being less than human in every conceivable way.

Not responding to a single aspect of his sublimity. And

that became a problem and I was disturbed by it. And being

disturbed by it, I, my battle was to give these people back

their humanity, give them their names, connect them to

family, tell them where they are in the scheme of things,

and uh, just to help them to help themselves back to a uh, a

dignity that uh, they were entitled to.

[CUT]

[NEWSPAPER-CR#5]

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Here's a collection of the newspaper

that we published called Unzravey. And this particular

issue which is dated January of 46 headlines the fact that

Ben-Gurion, uh, /fortsuance/ Ben-Gurion was about to arrive.

He was of course the first international figure that was

going to come into the scene, up to the time of Ben-Gurion

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 19

no one of any significance representing the larger Jewish

community was on the scene, but now Ben-Gurion was going to

come and the people were being excited by the fact that at

last there would be some kind of a physical presence which

would inspire them towards a redemption of their uh their

lives.

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: Here in this early issue there's a page

uh devoted to my role, uh they liked to refer to me as the

iron lieutenant because of the manner in which I-I-I took

their cause before the uh military and the philanthropic

organizations and uh, uh I responded with the long article

called One of you, which is also included in this collection

SWB:

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: This is the portrait of a great Jew and

the second one is the iron lieutenant.

[CUT]

[SYNC MARK 7]

RABBI ABE KLAUSNER: This is uh volume 2 of the series

Sheri-Tablay-Ta, the collection of the survivors. And uh

this one uh is dated July 1945. Uh here as a foreword I uh

indicated what rights the people had, specifically, they did

not have to return to the countries from which they came

though they were being compelled to return. And I insisted

that uh they stand fast against that policy. On this page

we have for this volume a list of camps where we found

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.

Wentworth Films LIBERATION/DP 2/10/95 RABBI ABRAHAM KLAUSNER Page 20

pockets of survivors, beginning with Durkheim, Mieldorf, and

so forth all the way down uh-uh to uh-uh Mithenbau and

others. And what we did is collected the names, the birth

date, and uh, the uh place from which they came, and

indicated where they were at the moment. For example this

group here were in a camp called Turkheim. Uh, here we have

a group of uh Polish Jews and here we have Hungarians and so

forth. Uh they are separated according to the countries

from which they came. And these volumes eventually were

combines in one major volume which was produced actually by

the United States Army.

[END]

Working transcript: not spell checked or verified for accuracy.