# ssUnited States Holocaust Memorial Museum

## Interview with Steen Fischer
## August 27, 2001
## RG-50.030*0418

# PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Steen Fischer, conducted on August 27, 2001 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

# STEEN FISCHER
# August 27, 2001

Beginning Tape One

Question: Can we begin with you telling us your full name?

Answer: Steen Christian Fischer.

Q: Can you tell us where and when you were born?

A: Born Copenhagen, Denmark, September 18, 1920.

Q: Can you tell us the name of your mother and father?

A: My father was Christian Fischer, my mother was Katrine (Antonette Frederikke) Siegfredsen Fischer.

Q: And can you tell us a little bit about where your father was from and your mother?

A: My father was born in a small Danish town called Viborg, in 1870, and -- where his father had a school. And my mother was born in Denmark in ’87, but she grew up in a Swedish town called Helsingborg, just across from Elsinore [indecipherable]. She talked fluent Swedish.

Q: Why did she go to school there?

A: Her parents had moved over there. Her father was working over there for awhile, and then they moved back to Denmark.

Q: Did you know your grandparents?

A: On my mother’s side, yes, on my father’s side, no.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your grandparents on your mother’s side?

A: He had a small farm fo -- when I recall him, but I don’t really remember that much about him because he passed away, oh, guess somewhere around like thir -- 1930, something like that, and

his wife died about the same time. My father's father had already passed away before that -- before I was born, and my father's mother passed away in the early 20's, I think I saw her once.

Q: Wha -- di -- did you ever go visit the farm? Could you describe it?

A: No, no.

Q: You just knew that about them?

A: Yep.

Q: Can you describe your -- the rest of your family? Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I had one sister. She was about a year older. She had diabetes, and died when she was about 30. Married, divorced, no children. And that was the only one, only sibling.

Q: And her name?

A: Inger Margrethe Fischer. She was born in 19 -- 1919.

Q: Describe what your home life was like. What -- what did -- what was your house actually like, or your apartment.

A: Yeah, okay. We had ah one of the attached houses, you have a long row, and there were two stories. Downstairs, living room, dining room, kitchen, service porch, and upstairs three bedrooms and a bath. A garden -- front garden and back. No garage, no car, room for bicycles, though. So -- and that is the only pa -- only house I lived in in Denmark, in Copenhagen.

Q: And did you know your neighbors? Or how -- what were your relations with the people who lived on either side of you?

A: Well, my father believed that you tip your hat to your neighbors, you don't get too friendly with them. You can get friendly with the people down the street, cause you can ignore them if you want to, but your neighbors, you are kind of stuck with. So we didn't really know the neighbors. The people across the street, o-on -- other people on the street we knew well. There

was a polar explorer two houses down the street, Peter Franken, who won a 64,000 dollar question back what, 30 years ago, and had a daughter Pippanuk, she was half Eskimo. And they had an ice winter in the back there and something like '28 I remember we were build an igloo. That was a lot of fun. Otherwise, we had an opera singer, and we had an author, and we had the fellow across the street was work in the library. Have a bunch of kids around, too.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your father, what he did for a living.

A: Okay. My father started out in -- when I was born he was -- he was working for a bank that went broke back in about '26 - '27. And then he bought into paper wholesale, and then as a side job he was working auditing in a savings bank.

Q: Auditing?

A: Auditing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And it got to be more and more time spent on the auditing, less and less on the paper. So, he kept working til he was middle 70's, auditing.

Q: And what did your mother do?

A: She -- a housewife. She didn't work after I was born.

Q: What -- what -- what would she do at -- in the home, and did she have help in any way?

A: No, she didn't have any help, but [indecipherable] she did a lot of baking, as I recall. She liked that. That was a big thing in those days.

Q: And can you talk a little bit about what it would be like at a family dinner, what the talk would be like, your mother and father? Or would your father come home for dinner?

A: Oh yeah, my father was always home for dinner. Well, I suppose general conversation was what -- what happened in school today, you know, and stuff like that.

Q: What about politics? Is that something that your parents discussed?

A: No, they were not that interested in it. My father was very conservative, which is -- would be like a Republican

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I think my mother was conservative, too, but we didn't discuss much wi -- politics.

Q: How do you know that your father was conservative?

A: Well, from what he said about it and from a newspaper he kept and some of the phrases of his, you know, you hear when he was talking -- talking with him.

Q: What about church or faith? Was that something that was discussed, or how was that a part of your family life?

A: Well, we used to go to church fairly regularly. Denmark has freedom of faith, with one exception, the king has to be Lutheran, or now the queen. But I was confirmed. I was -- see, we went six months we went once a week for a couple of hours, and then after that, you know, pretty much up to me whether I -- I wanted to go or not.

Q: Mm-hm. A-At what age?

A: 16? Something like 16.

Q: And was it something that was a part of daily life in any way, besides going to church?

A: Well, I was -- did a lot of rowing I was a member of a rowing club, and I did a lot of that, almost every evening in summertime, I would go out there, row. And then weekends we would take off, usually three man to a boat, go up along the coast with a tent and put that up somewhere, cook. Not always successfully, but -- and also in summertime you go off for a week or two with a boat and a tent. So you-- you know, somewhere out in a -- some of the smaller islands around.

Q: And who -- who -- how did you learn how to do that?

A: To row?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Well, you join the -- the row club and they -- they teach you.

Q: How close were you to the water?

A: Oh, about half hour by bicycle.

Q: Okay. So did -- no one had a car in your family --

A: No.

Q: -- everyone have a bicycle?

A: Yep.

Q: Really?

A: Never had a -- never had a car. I didn't learn to drive until I came to New York.

Q: Oh. Did your mom get around on the bicycle?

A: Yeah, she had one too. My father didn't, though, he used to walk, or streetcar.

Q: Do you remember the make of the bicycle?

A: There was a -- there was an outfit in Denmark that made them. No, I can't -- I don't know off hand.

Q: Talk a little bit about the friends that you did have in the neighborhood as a young boy, and as you began to get older, and that you might go out on these rowing excursions with.

A: What happened to them -- well, for one thing, I went to a boy's school, and some of the fellows -- one or-- two of them I'm still in contact with. One wound up in a real estate outfit, and sat in the same office in Copenhagen for about 60 -- 50 years or something like that. Then -- he -- he's now retired with Parkinson's, pretty bad shape. Another one wound up as a -- had a

bookstore, and one was a professor in some medicine. One was the head tax man in -- on a small island in Denmark. I was told once he was the most hated man on the island. I guess that goes with being a tax collector. And that's about the only ones I know what happened to them.

Q: You mentioned going out on the rowboat and even spending the week --

A: Mm.

Q: -- alone -- alone or with some friends. Can you talk about what that was like, you know, wh -- ho -- what kind of equipment did you take? How long did you spend --

A: Hello there.

Q: Stop for a second. [tape break] Can you describe one of these week -- weekend trips where you went with a few friends and you stayed on the island, you went on the rowboat.

A: Well, we would leave from the rowing club in Copenhagen, usually on Friday, usually after s -- after work, and -- which would be -- we leave about six, seven o'clock. And of course, in the summertime it's light until 11. So you go up the coast, and stop someplace up there, and we had s -- a certain place picked out we could stay in. Put up your tent and do some cooking and put your sleeping bag out. And next day just fool around on the beach, just swimming and all that stuff. That was -- that would be on a Saturday and then on Sunday row back to the rowing club.

Q: And how old were you when you were doing that?

A: Oh, started when I was about 15.

Q: Were you ever a -- a -- an explorer or a boy scout, or --

A: No, no.

Q: -- in any of those groups?

A: No, no.

Q: What kind of values would you say your father and your mother taught you?

A: Well, for -- the truth is worse than -- the -- honesty and not to be late. They tell you that thing about not to be late when you have an appointment. Be on time and be ready. So those were some of the important ones.

Q: And the honesty, what would they say about that, that you remember?

A: Well, there wasn't any doubt about it, you had to be honest, you know. Or, if you get caught not being honest, that was not advisable.

Q: A-And how were you with your parents, were you a rebellious young man, or were things pretty smooth at home?

A: Oh, pretty smooth. Didn't have many problems.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the city at that time? Di-Did you leave your neighborhood a lot?

A: Oh yeah, to go –to the rowing club that was about a half hour's ride or something like that. Half hour by bicycle. See I started working when I was 15, so that kind of changed the whole situation. Worked full time.

Q: Tell us about that, why did you leave school?

A: I finished school. I started school when I was five years old, in first grade, and then 10 years schools, so I was f-finished at 15, and then I got a job, I was supposed to start the first of September, but they called from the office and a -- oh, a couple of weeks early and said they were kind of short, could I start earlier. This was on a Thursday. And I was sitting -- my mother picked up the phone, I was sitting right there, so she told the gentleman, Mr. [indecipherable] that sh -- sure, I could do that. So he want to know when I could start. I -- could I come in on Monday? My mother said, no, Monday, that's a bad day to start on. So how about tomorrow, Friday? Oh, Friday's a bad day to start. Well, when could he start? He can be there in a half hour.

So I went out, got on my bicycle, and went in and started work. That was in a Danish Steamship owner's association as a -- as a messenger, and I was there from August til the end of March, and then I got a job in a steamship company as an apprentice, and I was there three years.

Q: What year is this that you started at the steamship company?

A: '37? Yeah, '37.

Q: And you say you were a messenger, what did that entail?

A: Ah, well, w-we -- I had to supply my own bicycle, of course. I had to drive around, deliver mail, and -- and run down to post office with telegrams and all those -- stuff like that.

Q: So you were kind of a courier, you were moving things around?

A: That's right.

Q: Okay. Why did your mom want you to start right then?

A: Oh, I think she knew I was kind of bored. There comes a time, you know, on a vacation when -- this vacation, you know, if you want to do something else-- I was anxious to get started working anyway. I wanted to work the ships, so I was lucky I got into that kind of business.

Q: What was your attraction to the ships?

A: Oh, I guess your -- Denmark is a small country, and I think the fact that you always work with ships, you know, you -- you've fooled around with the whole world. You have ships running all over and. You meet people from all over the world. Wind up working all over the world, too. So I -- I really liked that.

Q: What do you remember about the Jewish community when you were growing up? Were you aware of Jews living in the city, and what kind of contact did you have with them?

A: We had, in the school, as a -- as a routine there was religious instruction one hour a week. And we had, I think about two Jews in my class, Leif Manyas, and [indecipherable] I think that

was, and they were both excused from the -- from the religious instruction, as a matter of routine. And that was really the first I ever heard about Jews. My sister had a girlfriend that was Jewish.

Q: So there were Jews in your class, and your sister had her -- a girlfriend who was Jewish. Did they live in the same neighborhoods, or where they lived, would they be living in the same community as non-Jews?

A: Oh, same community as non-Jews. Oh, just like everybody else. Oh yeah, there was no different there, they would live in -- in the -- I don't know if there was anybody in the neighborhood we were, I am not so sure, but there might have been.

Q: And in your rowing club, for instance?

A: Yeah, you never -- you never kind of thought about whether anybody is Jewish or Catholic or Muhammadan or Lutheran, whatever they were. I mean, we all thought there wouldn't be any difference between a Jew and a non-Jew, for instance.

Q: What, for instance do -- in the -- the -- would you find that the Jews might be merchants in -- in Copenhagen?

A: Well, a lot of the stockbrokers, for instance, lot of stockbroker outfits were run by Jewish people, in name, Jewish names. [indecipherable] was one name -- Goldsmith was one. Hanseiger, I -- I knew those people. [indecipherable]

Q: Were there synagogues nearby?

A: There was one synagogue.

Q: One synagogue, okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And where was that?

A: In the middle of Copenhagen.

Q: And did you ever go there for any reason?

A: Inside? No, not inside. Oh, I passed it often, I -- my father's office was about a block down the street, so I passed it regularly, but I never been inside.

Q: Okay. Tell us a little bit more about your job as a courier. What would you be doing?

A: Well, it was a matter o-of running around to the various steamship companies with mail and -- and messages, and stuff like that. Also running to companies that was involved with shipping, like companies that took care of the signing on of sailors, the customs, immigration. Certain o-official outfits.

Q: And this is in the mid-30's? 1936 - '37?

A: '36 to -- to the end of March in '40. About three years.

Q: When the -- you can think back, and when you began to be aware of events going on in Europe, what do you remember first hearing, for instance, about Hitler? How did you hear about him, originally?

A: Well, probably, you know, the -- in the newscast on the -- on the newspapers. I was on the vacation in -- in May '39 in Germany on the youth hostel tour, friend of mine and I were down, and we took the train to Hamburg, stayed in a youth hostel, that was on a ship as a matter of fact. And then with a -- with boat, with train, walking, we went down to Koblenz and the Rhine went down to Heidelberg, and then we came back through Berlin, we came back to Copenhagen, about two weeks. The other vacations, when I worked for the steamship company they used to put -- put us on the ship as a deck boy and I'd work on the ship for two or three weeks, to give you some idea about the practical part of the shipping. And also that gave you a chance to go some of the ports around, see them loading. I was in Riga one time, we were loading railroad

ties. In Finland one time we were loading props -- what they used in the -- in the mines in England.

Q: Did you begin to notice more people coming through Copenhagen u-using the ships to perhaps leave Europe, or to leave the country of their origin?

A: No, there really wasn't much feeling about that.

Q: You didn't notice an increase in the volume of traffic in any way, of people perhaps going to Denmark, and then leaving Denmark to go somewhere else?

A: No. No. Then I got called in on the first of April for -- for conscription, and of course that -- on the ninth of April the Germans came in. That was a short affair.

Q: Well, before we -- we -- we go to that, I just want to chart a lit -- a little more what was happening that you -- I'm wondering if you could think back and remember what your thoughts were about what was going on in Europe. In 1939, things began to shift, Hitler was a figure, but he was also invading, and I wonder what you thought about that.

A: Yeah. Well, of course, I was down there in May of '39, in -- in the Germany, but then when the war started in September, and being in the shipping business, that made a whale of a difference in -- in the way we had to operate. For one thing, there was a danger of -- of mines and -- and you know, torpedoes and all that stuff. And there was a danger in the ships going into Germany, they were down there to load coal for Denmark, and there was a danger of losing ships, losing personnel. So, you know, the whole thing changed. Actually overnight there on -- on the -- the Sep-September, the first, I think, the ger -- German entered Poland on the 13th and the French declared war against Germany. That's when really the things started popping.

Q: Y-You mentioned that it changed how shipping operated. What kinds of new orders came into the ships, or did they stop going certain places because of danger?

A: Well, there was -- of course the minute you go to a German port, they were more controlled by the German military. In Denmark there was -- oh, a lot of things you had to -- to secure the ships against magnetic mines and things like that. You had to put extra lifesaving equipment on them, all those kinds of things. You had special instructions from -- from the military which -- where -- where to sail, where to avoid. So that meant running around and picking up instructions from the military whenever a ship was going to leave.

Q: Did you go on any of these ships after Germany invaded Poland --

A: No, I didn't.

Q: -- and these dangers began?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Okay. And what were your thoughts about what was going on? What -- how -- how did you understand what Hitler was doing?

A: You know when y -- when you are -- when you are 18 or 19, you really don't think that much about things like that. There was a lot of other things going on. You're kind of busy, so uh obviously it was kind of scary when you -- the Germans were never very popular in Denmark for one thing. This goes back to a -- a war in 1864 when Germany and Denmark were fighting and Denmark lost that war. And part of Denmark was given over to -- to Germany. That was then returned to Denmark in 1920. But there was still a lot of national [indecipherable] dislike in Denmark of the Germans, they were not very popular, never have been. So it -- it was -- obviously it was scary when you see what was going on in Poland and in -- in -- in France.

Q: Did you think that it would happen to your country, were there precautions or preparations?

A: Well, there was -- you know, you couldn't have any lights outside at nighttime, everything had to be turned off. You had to be careful walking or driving at night. Things started getting

rationed. There was a lot of things you couldn't get. And what makes it hard was that when you sit in Denmark and you couldn't get all these thing -- movies, bananas, what have you, you would see across to Sweden, which is only about a couple of miles, all the lights on, and you knew that they were having everything that they used to get. So that kind of makes you realize that there's really something going on that's not very good.

Q: Do you remember your father talking about this? What -- was there ever any thought of leaving Copenhagen --

A: We were-- no.

Q: -- of leaving Europe --

A: No.

Q: -- because of the war?

A: No, not in our case, no. I'm sure that Jewish people, you know, they were concerned, they would try to get away, but in our case there was no particular reason we should -- you consider that. And in -- during the first World War Denmark was neutral and came through without any problems, so everybody was hoping that it'll be the same this time.

Q: At this point where were you living? When you s -- 15 - 16 - 17, are you still living at home?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, in the suburb.

Q: Are you contributing to the family household?

A: Half of what I made.

Q: And what --

A: Which wasn't very much, though.

Q: What were you planning -- what were your career plans? What were you hoping to become?

A: Yeah. I -- I was apprenticed in [indecipherable] three year deals, I will be fin -- that will be finished the end of March in ‘40. And then I wanted to go overseas for f-further training. There was at that time a -- a company in Jamaica called Jamaica Banana Producers Association and that was run by a Danish fellow by the name of List, S.D. List, who was also the Danish consul, and I wrote him to try and -- to get involved with that outfit through the consulate. That didn’t work out. Then I tried to work something out with an outfit in Sweden and by the time we were getting all ready to, you know, do something, then we got occupied and I couldn’t get out.

Q: You said you -- it was a three year apprenticeship when -- what was it an apprenticeship to, exactly? What was it that [indecipherable]

A: Well, it was a three year learning period.

Q: Three year learning period.

A: Yeah, you went three years and then after that you finished and then you can go get a job somewhere else.

Q: Did people in your country expect the invasion?

A: No, no, no, that came as a complete surprise.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that?

A: I remember that morning, I was in the navy and we got called out on the parade ground and there were these bombers all over the place, which was -- I mean, the Danish air force didn’t have very many planes, so it was obvious that there was something going on and pretty soon we were just told that the Germans had come in and they had started occupying Copenhagen, and for us just to stay in -- in the naval yard and not do anything. So was -- it was -- the officers, they were kind of hard on them.

Q: What do you mean?

A: Well, they had, you know, some of them devote their whole life to -- to defend for Denmark and then to be told that can't do anything, that's not easy.

Q: Right.

A: But no, there was -- a number of Danes got killed, unnecessarily, I think, because I think the government had pretty good idea what was going to happen. And it was not right for the government to expect the soldiers to put up a defense when they knew that there wasn't a chance of being successful.

Q: So what were your feelings about being told not to fight?

A: Kind of frustration, I guess. I hadn't been in that long, I'd in -- only been in for nine days, actually. So I hadn't really -- hadn't fired a gun yet. But even so, you know, you are -- you are pri -- it -- it's -- it's pretty upsetting, a thing like that. Everybody was pretty uptight about it.

Q: H-How did the other sailors and people in the navy understand what the government did by telling them not to – to fight? How did they make sense of it?

A: It just didn't make any sense, because we – we had been told that this – there might be a thing like that happening, and if it did, you know, then there – there was no purpose in – in – in start fighting it. We – if y – if the country had bombers all over the place, and th-that -- the soldiers are coming in, there was -- the Germans were putting soldiers ashore at a number of points. Denmark's a small country. I mean, you can drive from the northernmost point to the southernmost point in four hours. And you can go from the easternmost point to the westernmost point in about the same, which we happen to do last year, so -- you know, it just isn't that big. And it's -- it's not like Norway with a lot of mountains and all that stuff, it's pretty flat. The highest point is 180 feet, or something like that. So trying to put up mu-much of a defense when

you -- a-against the -- the German army is a -- a pretty hopeless task, I mean, bordering on suicide almost. But even so, though I think most everybody thought at least there should be an effort. And it was -- it was kind of disappointing just to sit back, not do anything.

Q: Describe that day. Where were you exactly? And what was the first awareness you had that you were being invaded?

A: When I was in the navy yard in -- in Copenhagen at boot camp, and we just got -- go up in the morning very early, I don't know, at four o'clock, something like -- like this, because the bombers were all over the place there.

Q: And were they bombing?

A: No.

Q: Just flying?

A: They were just flying around. They were trying to scare everybody.

Q: These are German bombers?

A: German bombers, yeah. And the -- a German ship was putting soldiers ashore in -- in th -- right in Copenhagen for that matter, close to the navy yard. And then I had seen a number of course.

Q: So you came out of your barracks, and what did you s -- what did you see, what did you -- what were you told?

A: We just told that there was nothing we could do, and the king had decided we're not going to fight, and we were just going to stand by and then see -- await developments. So we -- we were staying in the camp for, I guess, about a week befo -- before we were -- permitted outside. Ours had been assigned a ship that was supposed to go to Greenland on the 17th of May. Remember that day, that's a Norwegian national day. We were supposed to Greenland on the 17th of May

for inspection and to make sure that foreign fishing trawlers did not start going into green territorial waters, because Greenland is Danish. So we were supposed to go out there and I was looking forward to that, that would have been quite an experience. But instead of that we went to some small port in Denmark and sat there for -- until I got demobbed at the British say, i-in December of ’40.

Q: You got what?

A: Dist -- discharged from the military. British used to call it demobbed.

Q: Right.

A: Anyway, when I was sent home there, in the middle of December, that was the end of my military career. So it was only about eight month, nine month.

Q: I’m going to go back just to clarify something. You had been trying to get placed in some companies, the company in Jamaica and the other company, and then I guess that didn’t work. Is that when you signed up to be in the navy? Or did you get drafted?

A: They have conscription, I got drafted.

Q: Oh.

A: So you had to put in your time, and I was all set to put in my time there, and I was applying to go to these places after the military service was over with.

Q: Okay. So that first day when the planes were flying around, did the Germans come inside the naval yard?

A: No, no. That day they stayed outside.

Q: And did you have any contact with your family?

A: No. No, that -- that -- oh, I think that was almost a week before we could do anything. E-Even telephone, or write a letter, an-anything like that.

Q: Did it feel like you were sort of in prison there?

A: Basically that's what it was.

Q: And when you finally were able to leave or make telephone calls, what had changed in Copenhagen?

A: Well, of course, there were German soldiers all over the place, so it -- it wa -- it was obvious there wa -- it was not -- it had changed. I mean, it wasn't as nice as it used to be. When you get occupied like that, you know, it puts a kind of damp on everything else. The stores closed early. They were running -- already that time there were certain things that were getting short of. So I -- I had a bicycle, I bicycled home. Rest of them went back to th -- to the boot camp.

Q: What did your mother and father say to you?

A: Well, of course, they were -- they were happy-- I -- I mean, th-there hadn't been any fighting go on that I've been involved with, actually. But they weren't too happy about the Germans being there.

Q: Di -- can you describe one of your first encounters with a German? I mean, what was that like when you'd see them on the street, and they knew you were in the navy.

A: Well, I had the uniform on, the navy uniform. They didn't pay any attention. I mean, there was so many of them and basically so few of us. I think the whole navy was something like, I don't know, 8,000 -- eight -- 9,000 people, which is not much compared to the German army.

Q: But did you have any interactions with German soldiers?

A: No, none whatsoever.

Q: So they sort of left you alone?

A: Basically yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Were they t-taking over people's homes at all, and using them as offices, and --

A: No, in the beginning, everybody was supposed to be -- everything was supposed to be very friendly and they took over some schools, took over some hotels, but not any private houses. Not in the beginning.

Q: And what were your friends saying at that time about being occupied like that?

A: Well, I -- cause all I -- I did was I -- I went out to my parent's house and spend the time with them, then went back to the camp, so I didn't get around to talk much to -- to anybody. That time the~~re~~, the Germans announced that everything was supposed to be pretty much continued operating the way it had been, where the police were supposed to be Danish, and the courts were supposed to be Danish, and all that. The basic government was supposed to be Danish, except of course the foreign office. So they had indicated that was not going to be much change of anything, which I suppose to an extent was right in the beginning but it didn't last very long.

Q: How did it change? When did you notice that it began to change?

A: The gers -- the Germans started trying to run more and more things, there were more propaganda, there were more things in a -- and in the radio. There were commentators that was very much in favor of Germany. Some of the ones that used to be in favor of the British, they were not on the radio any more. Denmark used to be primarily British oriented, one reason being that the -- the biggest trade partner was -- was Britain. The Danish economy was a refining economy in the sense that they brought grain in, and they exported bacon and -- and butter. And all that went to -- or almost all had went to England and so relationship between Denmark and England was very close. Also because royalty-wise there was family-wise between Denmark and Sweden and not much from Denmark to Germany.

Q: So what did you do for eight months in the navy during this occupation -- period of occupation?

A: I painted the ship. I think we must have painted our ship 14 times. There wasn't much else to do, we are lying in this little harbor, you know, and just keep the thing shined up, keep it clean. Oh, actually, I was only there for part of the time, then I got transferred to -- back to Copenhagen and I was working for an admiral, I was doing some office work for him, and then I got demobbed in December, that was the end of that.

Q: And that was -- was that earlier than usual, or they just didn't need you? You got demobilized?

A: Ah, yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But normally you'll be in between a year an-and a year and a half.

Q: Okay.

A: So it was a lot earlier than -- than normal.

Q: And -- and why was that?

A: Just sitting on a ship someplace, you know, there wasn't -- you didn't learn anything. And they didn't need a full crew on a -- on -- on most of the -- the ships, so they just had too many people. So that -- told to go home.

Q: And at this point were y -- you get a salary, don't you?

A: In the navy?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, yeah, but it -- 25 cents a day or whatever it was. It wasn't very much.

Q: So were you giving some to your family, or --

A: No, I wasn't living home.

Q: Okay. And then what happened when you were demobilized, sent home, and --

A: And then I and I start to look around for a job, and there was one ad in the paper, there was this one steamship company that was looking for a junior clerk so I applied and I found later that I was the youngest that applied, and I was the one with the lowest requirements salary-wise, so I got the job. And that was a company called [indecipherable] and that started in January of ’41, and was there until sometime in September, October ’43.

Q: Okay. And how old were you at this point in ’41?

A: I was 20 when I started, January of ’41 I was 20.

Q: And you’re out of the navy now --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- how -- how is your life different from before, when the Germans weren’t there?

A: What I see, the work life is entirely different. As far as like the rowing was concerned, it stayed the same but the day Germany occupied or started go against the Russia, they prohibited rowing in Denmark. I think because they were afraid we would row to Sweden, which could easily have been done. But anyway, that took care of -- of all activities over the weekends. And they a -- it was just, you couldn’t go out in the evening, you know, you had to be home before it got dark. There wasn’t much partying going on. If they had a -- if you went to a party, it was an all night party. That’s in the summertime, that was kind of nice. That was something else.

Q: It was all night because you wouldn’t walk home at --

A: Weren’t permitted.

Q: -- late at night.

A: You weren’t permitted to. And you couldn’t be more than I think like three people meeting in the street, be -- anything beyond that was illegal. Stuff like that.

Q: At what point do you begin to hear about friends or countrymen beginning to resist?

A: That was probably in ’40 -- ’42, I think. That’s when the -- the illegal papers started coming out. We always tried to listen to the British forecast, news in the evening, and the -- the illegal newspapers started somewhere around that time, late ’40 -- ’41, I think it must have been. So I want to get involved and I -- a friend of my mother was married to a chap that was in the newspaper business. So I went to see him -- went in to see him one day and told him that I was -- kind of like to get involved with some of that stuff there, and so he hemmed and hawed a little bit, he wasn’t going to admit he was involved, but he said why you come back in a week, and so on. So I came back a week later on, he said okay, here’s a -- a name of a guy, you could go and talk to him. So I went down to see this fellow and he was pretty deep in one of the illegal newspapers. I don’t remember the name, free Danes, what it was. But there was quite a few of them. The students had one, the Communists had one, the Republicans had one. I mean, there were a whole batch of those being published.

Q: But do y -- why do you think your mother’s friend trusted you enough to send you to the -- to the other person?

A: Oh, they knew me pretty well. I mean, they’d known me for years.

Q: And when you went to see the person who was very involved --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- you thought maybe the paper was called free Danes, just tell us a little bit about what that meeting was like. What did he ask you? What did you say to him?

A: Well, I told him that I was, you know, where I came from and that I would like to -- to get involved with some of the stuff and I told him what I -- my background, you know, from the navy, and -- and the steamship company, and all that. And that I was ready to do whatever was, you know, with -- with a newspaper, either distribution or -- or to run copies of it, or whatever

was. And he just said well, I'll talk to you one of these days, and then I went home and then a few days later I got word, I had to go -- come back in. And he ha -- must have done a little checking other ways. So I came back in and he said okay, let's get at it. Then I went somewhere, I don't know where -- I don't remember where it was, but I went to this address and -- and started running copies of this paper. And --

Q: And when you got to the address, what would you say? Ho-How would th -- you assure them that you were to be trusted?

A: I guess the fact that I came from the other chap. So then we -- we would run newspapers off, and then we would take care of the distribution, and then kind of one -- one thing took you, you know, it -- you get more and more involved, get more and more mad at the Germans. So you get -- you get really -- you -- you -- you get pretty satisfied that you think that what you're doing is not going to change the war, obviously. But at least, under the circumstances, it's kind of more or less the most you can do. You can't do a heck of a lot more than that, under those circumstances. But that was a beginning. And in those years there wasn't much sabotage or any of that stuff going. That came later.

Q: What gave you the desire to resist?

A: Well, my whole career being ruined by this stuff, in a sense, you know, I mean here I was trying to get to Jamaica or -- or whatever, and th-that's all ruined because they came in there. And after all, there wasn't much reason for the Germans coming in, just the fact that they want to be sure that they would get the Swedish iron ore down along the coast of Norway, and they wanted protect a -- protect th-the ships. Didn't seem to be any particular reason for them to occupy Denmark and ruin my career, two of them at the same time. So I just didn't like it.

Q: Ca -- the place where you made the newspapers, what -- where was it? Was it in a -- a hidden place, or --

A: Oh, somebody's basement somewhere.

Q: Okay. And there was a printing press down there?

A: No, it was a duplication. Every time around you get one sheet, you know, and there was a lot of times around, and then you had to put them together o-on -- you had to take them out and -- and distribute them. We had to be a little bit careful when you do that, too. But there were var- various ways you could do that, one was to go into an apartment -- a high-rise, and then start from the top and leave one paper in front of each door and just run down as fast as you could and get out of there, in case there was some Germans living somewhere in an apartment. The other thing was driving around on a bicycle, if you see a bunch of people standing, say at a -- say at a bus stop, you throw a bunch of papers over there and then you peddle around the corner as fast as you can. That worked pretty good, too. And then, of course there was the steady customers, you know. So, oh, many ways of getting rid of them.

Q: When you would go out to distribute, did you ever alter your appearance in any way so that --

A: No. No, cause you don't think anybody's going to see you. I mean, if you run down the stairs pall mall all the doors are closed. And if you just throw the papers, people are not going to get that much of a chance to really look at you so they can report you, and so no, there wasn't much problem with that one.

Q: What would have happened if you'd been caught with those newspapers, or maybe you were at one point?

A: No, I never got caught- with the newspapers. In the beginning the Danish poleesh -- police would have pick you up and probably put you in the jail for a week or two. It was illegal to do

that stuff, officially it was illegal. You weren't supposed to do that. But it, you know, it wasn't any major crime as such. And at that time, the -- the Germans were not in working as the police, or they were not -- didn't have any judges around. We're talking about '41 - '42, and things got hotter after that.

Q: Can you tell us about that?

A: Well, then in -- in -- was in f-fort -- I mean in '40 -- kind of hard to remember what happened what year. The -- the Germans threw the police out that is after I got in court. The Germans started to get more and more involved, as always, the police. And they started controlling a bunch of the courthouses, so if you did get caught, you could get really put in the slammer by the -- by the police. Also, the -- I think the Germans insisted the police pick up all the Communists and put them in the camps somewhere. And it -- it -- it's kind of hard to remember what happened, what year that is.

Q: Did you ever assume another name?

A: Oh yeah. Yeah, everybody had a number of names. And that wa -- that's the reason people now, ask me do you, you know, whatever, and what was his name during the war, you know -- oh, you know, something entirely different. I don't remember the names I used, but I know I had an I.D. card for several. But that was kind of standard -- standard -- everybody did that.

Q: How did you get those I.D. cards?

A: Well, there were -- there were people in official offices, that didn't like the Germans either, and they kind of slid it to you under the table, you know. That was not that difficult to get ahold of. You had an I.D. card, you get a driver's license, you get, you know, most -- you get rationing stamps too, which, you needed them that time if you wanted legal -- when you became illegal. So you'd get all these things.

Q: Okay, we'll stop.

A: Okay.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Can you tell us any name you remember that you used during that period?

A: I'm pretty sure of -- I used Jorgen for awhile. But, I mean, then after the war, right after the war when I came back th-the liberation, then I had different names and different cards. I -- I can't tell you, changing our names, can't remember.

Q: And you mentioned that you might not use a name for very long.

A: Yeah. Yeah, we never knew whether whether -- particularly, you know, after the German got real hot you never knew whether they knew of one of your names and it might -- if -- if you got picked up for something not very important, that might remind them of something that would have been important.

Q: Wh-When did you begin to think of yourself as someone who was resisting the Germans?

A: The whole thing comes gradual. I mean, that i-isn't one day all of a sudden, boom. And th-th-the thing was, everybody was -- was involved all -- no, I shouldn't say everybody, an awful lot of people were involved, get to be more and more all the time. So it was nothing unusual. I mean, later on during the war, when I was in jail, my sister was involved with a newspaper, my father contributed, and my mother would feed these fellows. The old system, you know, where you have the plant in the -- in the left side of the window stay away, and the right side of the window, come on in and eat. So I -- everybody was kind of involved one way or the other, and I -- me -- I can't say th-that this happened this time or that time. I -- I -- that I'd realized of -- how deep it was. It just get deeper and deeper all the time.

Q: Are you living at home at this point where you begin to do the underground newspapers?

A: Correct.

Q: Did you tell your parents you were doing this?

A: I don't think I really told them outright, but I'm pretty sure they knew what was going. I mean that -- you didn't -- you don't run around and talk much about those things there, to anybody.

Q: Were you a member of any organization then? I mean, at some point did you affiliate with one of the underground organizations?

A: Well, you don't really join as a -- as a membership card and all those kinds of things. You just kind of get involved, you work with them. I don't think this newspaper group had any membership roster or anything like that, you know, which would have -- not have been a very practical thing in case a German had gotten hold of it.

Q: But you would go there and you'd run off the newspapers, organize them and distribute them. Who would tell you where to distribute them?

A: I don't really remember. I think you kind of worked that out between yourselves, you know, that -- pretty much what area you were going to cover.

Q: And when you were together with the people, let's say working on the newspapers, what would your conversations be like? Would you be talking about other things you could possibly do, or the war, or --

A: Well, nights you -- you would talk about the news that was in the -- in the paper that day, and other things that you might have heard that hadn't gotten in the paper yet. You couldn't have everything in the paper, it was just a few mimeographed sheets. And as time went by there were -- there were just more and more things happening all the time. So you couldn't put everything in there, so you would exchange news, what was happening.

Q: What other kinds of things did you do to resist?

A: Well, it started out with the papers.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then in the fall of ’43, the whole thing came up with the -- with the Germans wanted the Jews to the camps in Germany.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable] intelligence that what they want. Anyway, they came up, and that must have been September, October of ’43.

Q: This was when the Germans were going to actually round up the Jewish population?

A: That’s correct.

Q: Right around the weekend of Rosh Hashanah.

A: Yeah. And there was a -- a fellow in the German embassy, Dukritch or something like that, he was the shipping attaché, and he knew about it, and he had told some of the Danish politician about it, and they had passed word out to who the Chief Rabbi was told to -- about it. And of course that went down the ranks, pretty soon we heard about it and then we started getting -- having the Jews getting away to Sweden. You had -- you had to get out and -- and -- and warn them, and then find out where they were going to be staying because a lot of them moved away from their own house. And then they would pick them up and take them out in the countryside to where the fishing boats were.

Q: But let’s go through that process, I mean, how do you remember hearing about it and saying okay, I’m going to go warn some families? How did it actually work? One -- you know, give us one day, one day that you helped.

A: Details, they are somewhat blurred. There was one fellow, he was a doctor, he and his wife, they had one child, and as I recall somebody asked me whether -- whether he had taken off, and I said, I don’t know, but I’ll check him. So I went to see him, and -- and he was still there. So I said to him, well, you know, you better start moving. So he and his wife and the -- and the kid, I

took them to a safe house and then I don't know if it was that night or the next night, I took them out to a small town called Taarbek, that's on the coast just north of Copenhagen, and got them on a boat to Sweden. That kind of the way it works. You hear about somebody who is somewhere and then you go out there and -- and the amazing thing was that -- I mean, I was what, 22 at that time, 23, and you go out and talk to a -- a family, you never see them before in your life, and you say, hey I'm here to -- to help you get away, and they go to -- go with you.

Q: No hesitation?

A: No. Well, you know, they were desperate. And I guess that, what was the choice? There was going to Theresienstadt and that was not that desirable. So when you come there an-and tell them, hey, I'll help you get to Sweden, and they -- they are inclined to go along with you.

Q: So you went to his house, and then how did you get them to a safe house? Did you have to wait until the evening to do that?

A: There were certain taxis we could use and there were certain ambulances. There was a -- there was a Dr. Ole Sager at the hospital who was very involved with all this stuff, and we could also, through him get an ambulance, and take them out to a safe house. And then in the evening there was certain taxis that were, yo-you know, th-the drivers were considered safe. Then take them -- get ahold of one of them to take them out to Taarbek, it was called, just north of Copenhagen. And there was an inn right there, right on the water, right in the harbor, so put them in a -- they had a big meeting room -- ballroom I guess it was, and they would go in there and wait, and then during the night the fisherman decided when they were ready to go, and then you walked them down, you get them on the boat, and they took off.

Q: So they --

A: We never loosed one -- lost one.

Q: When they would be in the inn, they were in a big ballroom? How many people were in the ballroom?

A: Well, that all depends upon how many boats you had lined up for the night, but you couldn't put that many people on board, I don't know how many -- how many it was, it was 12 - 15 or something like that, on the fishing boat, it wasn't very big. But you might have, you know, enough for four or five boat. One time we had the place full and all a -- all of a sudden rumor started that the Gestapo was coming around. So everybody had to get outside and hide somewhere. There were houses around it, you had to hide in the garden and all that stuff, that was bit of a mess.

Q: Did the Gestapo come that time?

A: No, that was false rumors, we go -- we got everybody back in the -- in the ho -- inside, and then down on the -- on the fishing boat and they took off then.

Q: S-So when the fisherman were ready, you would go and get the people you were in charge of and walk them through the -- the coast, right up to the --

A: It wasn't very far.

Q: Okay.

A: I mean you were in the harbor --

Q: Okay, okay.

A: -- so you just walk down the pier to where the fishing boat was, and then they go aboard, then they take off. Whenever the- fisherman is ready.

Q: Do you think people in the town besides the innkeeper and the fishermen knew what was going on?

A: I'll be very surprised if they didn't.

Q: If they didn't?

A: Oh yeah. I mean, you know, you have a lot of people running around there in the middle of the night when you're not supposed to be outside. So obviously they know that something is cooking. And a lot of the fishermen lived there, so naturally their families would know about it.

Q: So this was a -- an effort of many people in a sense, as a sort of network?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: That --

A: I ope --

Q: Uh-huh?

A: No, I was just going to say there were -- had -- so happened that the people I was working with used this port at Taarbek. There were other people who used ports south of Copenhagen. There were some using ports north of -- there was one port north of Copenhagen called Gilleleje and one time they had several Jews hidden in the -- in the church, and somehow or the other the Gestapo found out, and picked them all up, and they all wound up in -- I think they all went to Theresienstadt. But that was one of the few times anybody were lost. One time we were just up around Elsinore, and we were helping some people over and the Germans came and they started shooting, and one guy, he was a policeman, Larsen I think his name was, hit him in the stomach, which is pretty miserable. So I wasn't involved with that, they got him down to -- to the hospital where Hulsaker was and they operated on him and they shipped him to Sweden the next evening to a hospital an-and he came through okay.

Q: Did you yourself ever go on one of the boats over?

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: Could you describe what that trip is like?

A: I went over three times. The first time I was told to go because somehow or the other they said that -- that somebody in -- in -- in the Germans I ha -- knew I was involved with the stuff, so they said, you better get over to Sweden for awhile, lay low. So I went on a boat, and we went about halfway across to Sweden, and then there was the Swedish fishing boat. And the two of them went alongside, and we climbed over in the Swedish fishing boat and then went over to Sweden. So --

Q: How does that transfer actually work? It seems like it could be dangerous.

A: No, no, no.

Q: No? To go -- you would physically just jump --

A: From one fishing boat they were -- they were right next to each other.

Q: Go right next to each other, okay.

A: They go slow ahead you know, so --

Q: Okay.

A: No, that wasn't any problem. That was one time. Another time I went over there, there was a brewery in a small town, Elsinore, that's Hamlet's Castle, called Wiibroe, and they had an arrangement with a boat that would go from Copenhagen to Elsinore, which is something like 20 miles, with empty beer bottles and cases. Well, they would leave a room in the middle of the -- of the hold, so you would hide down there. And the time I -- I forgot the reason, I had to get over there, was something I had to bring over and there was a couple with a baby that was going on the same one. And th-the baby had gotten a shot, you know, of -- to be sure it was quiet, because when you get down there, then they put beer bo -- case with beer bottles all the way around, and then the -- before the ship could leave Copenhagen the German harbor patrol ~~or~~ whatever it was, will come down as a matter of order and just check the ship out. So you could hear them walking

around on the deck. And then we took off, and we got out on the sound and then the same thing alongside the Swedish fishing boat, and they take some of the beer cases away, and so you get out.

Q: What kind of shot did the baby get to be quiet?

A: I have no idea. There was a -- there was a doctor they had. But that was something there- to calm her down you know, it wouldn't make any -- it wouldn't make her cry or anything like that.

Q: At that moment when you were sort of hidden in this little area surrounded by beer cases, and you can hear the Nazis walking around, what's going through your mind? What -- what are people thinking and feeling?

A: That wa -- that was one of the three scariest moments I -- I had during the war. I-It's -- it's scary. You know, you -- you don't want to do that too often. But we were lucky the baby stayed quiet, and -- and so we got off in good shape.

Q: And you said th -- what was the third scariest moment [indecipherable]

A: Oh, the second time was -- well that was actually after I had been caught by the Gestapo had been in the jail for awhile, they were going to bring us down to Germany, they stopped -- they stopped the car somewhere, there were 13 of us in the -- in this truck. And you sit there, you handcuffed with your -- in the back and you have a -- a wire going through so nobody get anywhere. So they went from Copenhagen down to [indecipherable] over the ferry to the island Funen and then we went a piece on this blacktop and then you could feel that you were going on a -- on a dirt road. And then they stopped and they told us to get out, they took the -- the handcuffs off and said, time to relieve yourself. So you stand there doing your thing and we knew that shortly before that the Germans -- the Gestapo had taken a bunch of fellows from the camp out somewhere in the northern part of Zealand

and they shot them all. So when you're do -- standing there doing that thing, one of the German soldiers fired a -- a salvo, this machine pistol there. That was pretty scary. But he just fired in the air, you know, for the fun of it, or whatever, so -- and the third time was another time I'd been in Sweden, I came back to Copenhagen in an afternoon, and that was my own stupidity. I had bought a copy of the London Times, and I had that in my briefcase, and I was sitting the streetcar, and through one end of the streetcar come these German soldiers and start -- want to check everybody's briefcase. Fortunately, before they got to me they stopped and they got off and went somewhere else. But that was -- I -- I was very scared, I -- I'll admit that.

Q: Were you scared a lot when you were doing this kind of resistance work?

A: I -- I think so, yeah. Y-You don't really get that used to it.

Q: Can we go back to that two week period where so many of the Jews were saved in your country.

A: '43 --

Q: Yes.

A: Fall of '43.

Q: Fall of '43.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: It's been described as a -- as some sort of a two week period and there's a stream of people going over to Sweden. I-In that two week period, what -- what was going on for you? Were you just sort of up every day, hardly sleeping, or -- what was going on for you? Ho -- were you getting assignments of other people to help, or --

A: You don't get much sleep, that's one thing. And they had some kind of pill, I don't remember the name of it, that I -- could keep you going for a long time. But usually, after two nights

without hardly any sleep, then you had to have one night. The company I work for, I -- I worked ow -- a lot of times I -- I didn't show up, but they -- I think the boss knew very well what was going on -- he didn't ask me, I didn't tell him, but I think he knew what was happening. So then after, you know, two -- two or three weeks, then it started easing off, and -- and you wouldn't be on every night any more.

Q: But when you say you're on, how do you know you're supposed to be on? Does someone come and tell you we need you tonight?

A: Well, you know, you -- you -- you -- you talk to these people all the time. Whether they specifically said -- I -- I -- I don't remember. I just don't remember now. I -- I'm sorry. It's a long time ago, you know, and I tried lot of things in between, so some of them -- those things in that time, you know, they kind of -- I've forgotten about them.

Q: Was there a point that you became known and relied upon for the work that you're able to do in the resistance?

A: Oh, I suppose some of the fellows or the girls I worked with, you know, they kind of respect each other. There were a couple of fellows that were really out -- there was one girl that was outstanding, that I knew quite well.

Q: And who was that?

A: The girl's name was Jette Hec Johansson, she was quite well known, she was a great girl. And the fellows, oh God, what was their names? Hec Johan -- Hed I remember her name because I met her, oh what, 10 years ago at a reception in Copenhagen the queen had. And Jette was invited and I was there, and so I happened to see her, and I hadn't seen her for so long, I went over to say, You're Jette, aren't you? That was it. So we had a -- a great reunion. Yeah, she was a

wonderful person. So that was -- that was a bunch of -- of nice g -- nice people, you know, reliable.

Q: It was -- did you ever receive any training for what you were doing?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, there wasn't any of that stuff. I guess there wasn't really time for that. Besides that anything organized, you want to stay clear of.

Q: So that was something conscious, you really stayed away from the organized --

A: Absolutely.

Q: Oh.

A: Oh, absolutely, you don't want to get involved with that.

Q: Why?

A: Well, Germans have -- the Gestapo had a way of convincing people to talk, and if they got ahold of one fellow in an organized thing like that, you know, they could kind of find out the names of a bunch of other people. That's the reason from one group to the other, you didn't know many people you know, who -- certainly didn't know the names. And there were usually one, maybe yo -- one fellow in your group would know one fellow in the other group. And that's the way you do the communications. Then th -- later on, you know, what -- when -- after I got caught and sent and things got more organized, and I don't know what -- how it was done in that time. But that was -- that was after the summer of '44.

Q: Okay. When you were to leave your home and you might be going -- I'll go back to the period where -- the two week period where all the rescues were taking place, when you would leave your home, would you be aware that someone might be following you?

A: No. No, I never thought about that.

Q: So you didn't feel like people knew what you were doing?

A: Very, very, very few did. I mean, there wasn't anybody around where I lived that knew, as far as I know. I never asked anybody af-after the war.

Q: And did you ever have any encounters with the Danish police?

A: Well, yeah, I helped one policeman wanted to get to Sweden one time, Danish policeman, he had gotten in trouble, so I -- I help him over. But that was about the only time I was involved, was really involved in anything.

Q: How did you regard them, though? I've heard that it was a sort of an open secret that they -- they knew that some of this resistance was going on --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- and they didn't try very hard to stop it.

A: That's right. That's absolutely right.

Q: Okay.

A: As a matter of fact, on occasion they helped.

Q: Okay. Anything that you were involved with?

A: No, just what I've heard.

Q: Right.

A: But poli -- police no -- was not very friendly toward the -- toward the Germans. And after the war I met a fellow who was in the police at that time, and he was telling me things that was going on that showed the police was -- a lot of times was in -- in a sense against the Germans.

Q: When you would take a family to the coast and get them to Sweden, did you -- was there anyone you had to report back to --

A: No.

Q: -- that they were rescued?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No. I think what they -- what they probably did when they got to Sweden, they were th -- I think there was some kind of a -- an organization over there that took care -- I mean, you know, you get over there with a couple of kids, you don't know anybody, you have no money, so somebody got to look after you. And there was some organizations over there, both Swedish Jews, and -- and Danish Jews who had escaped and -- and look after them.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about the money. These -- these rescues did take money, you had to take taxis, or trains, or pay the fishermen. Where were you getting the money to make this happen?

A: I never paid a fisherman, for one thing. There are stories that some fishermen got paid because they risked their boat, but I never heard of anybody, seen anybody do it. The ambulance, of course, we didn't pay them. Taxis, most of the time we didn't pay them either, cause they were kind of part of the whole thing. Where you get money from -- you never use any. I didn't use any. In those -- in those days I lived at home, and I got the salary for most of the time, even if I didn't show up. He was very nice about it. So -- no, I -- I -- I don't really know who -- who did that.

Q: So in the instances that you were involved in, no money was paid to the fishermen?

A: That's correct.

Q: Did they ever say why they were doing this?

A: Well, of course, a lot of those fellows didn't like the Germans either, so they were all -- that was one of the reasons for it. And then the other thing is basically that this really wasn't so much o-of Jews or not Jews, or whatever. They were -- it was maybe because they were, you know, Danish citizens, they were just like the rest of us, you know, and all of a sudden the Germans -- if they had been going after the red haired, it would have been the same thing, probably. It just happened that the Germans went after Jews, so then you help the Jews get off -- they wer -- escape.

Q: I read that one prominent activist, [indecipherable] Jacobsen said that -- that it really wasn't about Jews, it was -- it was more about democracy, that the Danes were tired of the Germans being there --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- resented it.

A: Yep. Oh yeah, no, it wasn't because they were Jews. And then of course, as time went on, there were other than Jews that -- that had to get to Sweden. After -- after that fall of '43 --

Q: There were other Jews that had to get to Sweden?

A: No, no, there were others, than Jews. I mean, there were -- there were like allied bombers who'd be shot down over Denmark, and then their crew had to be helped to get over to -- to Sweden. A classmate of mine, Billy Talbotsa was flying for the Royal Air Force, and he got shot down over Denmark, and he managed to get his way to Elsinore and they put him on a kayak. Unfortunately, he -- he didn't make it across, he drowned. But many others got over there. Also there were parachute agents that had to get back. Niels Bohr you know, there was one guy that came over illegally to Sweden on a fishing boat and then wound up at the Manhattan Project.

How in the hell where is- Las Cruces New Mexico. Poli -- certain Danish politicians, wound up in England for BBC. So, there were many others than just Jews that were shipped.

Q: Were there people that you knew, that you admired i-in your country, who -- for their resistance also? That inspired you, I guess.

A: No, not really, because I didn't know who was, you know, the big mucky-mucks. They had the Danish Freedom Council, but that was very secret, and I don't think anybo -- anybody knew who was on -- at that thing. [indecipherable] Jacobsen was one, they come out after the war. There was -- there were a -- there was -- I think there were a couple of doctors on that, one or two politicians. But no, there was -- there wasn't really much mentioning of names. It was just too dangerous. Wouldn't do any good.

Q: Did you have a sense that there were a lot of people involved, resisting?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: You just didn't know who they were.

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, there was -- I don't think there was any doubt that there were a lot of people, lot of people involved many different ways.

Q: Talk some about people who weren't involved and maybe even who were informing or collaborating.

A: We had that too.

Q: Yeah. Tell us about that.

A: That was one of the things that the resistance movement did was eliminate some of those people. There were a number of them got -- got -- got shot. One guy who reported me into Gestapo, that's the reason I got caught, and he got eliminated. So that happened to a number --

Q: Do you remember who that was?

A: No. No I never knew his name.

Q: How did he know that you were --

A: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know who he was, I never talked to him, but I heard afterwards that he was the one that had reported to Gestapo that we were -- we -- we were meeting in this particular place with the -- with the parachute agent.

Q: [indecipherable] Did you know anybody who was involved in that, that -- in the elimination of -- of informants?

A: No.

Q: Did you carry a weapon?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What did you carry?

A: Parabellum it was called. I don't remember whether it was made -- I think it was Belgium [indecipherable]

Q: And where did you carry it?

A: Inside the jacket.

Q: Where did you --

A: But not all the time, you know, only when you -- when you had -- on a job.

Q: Was it hard to get bullets for it?

A: We didn't use very many, so no, I don't -- I don't recall that. You didn't use it very much very seldom you had to -- I think that was only once or twice I had occasion to use it. You want to avoid that as much as possible.

Q: What were the circumstances that you did use it?

A: Oh, there was one time some guy had got the idea that there was a -- a depot out somewhere that was just absolutely full of -- full of weapons, and there wasn't many Germans taking care -- looking after -- guarding it. And there was like a small hill and up on top there was a fellow sitting with a machine gun. And then there were a couple of guys walking around inside of the fence. So the way it was set up, we had a friend of mine worked for -- for a brewery, so I had arranged for us to borrow a couple of trucks. So we drove out there this morning, and the wa -- one guy had a rifle, and he was supposed to shoot the guy on top. And I had to get the rifle out to him, which is kind of hard when you -- on a bicycle kind of hard to hide~~..~~ So I borrowed a -- a rake and a spade, whatever it was, and then tied it on the bike and put the gun the middle of the burlap around it and took out the -- anyway, he was supposed to shoot the guy on top, and he missed. The meantime we drive up alongside, we show -- throw the tarp over the barbed wire and jump inside. And -- but since he didn't get the guy up on top -- he was sitting up there with a machine gun and he was doing a lot of shooting, so we got back over the f -- over the fence and ran away. It was just -- you -- you couldn't. When you -- you have a revolver, you don't start fighting with machine guns, your odds are against you.

Q: Oh, so you -- you shot it, but you also then decided you were outnumbered?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. So what were you going to do? Take all the guns?

A: Yeah, we could always use some more.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That was in -- must have been ’44, early ’44, I think. When did I get caught? I got caught in ja -- June ’44, I think it was. Must have been early ’44.

Q: So wa -- did you have any successful raids on German depots --

A: No.

Q: -- where you did get guns?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Was a -- a lot of parachuting down of the allies. And then they also, they -- they started building some over there, making some, you know, manufacturing some. They were primarily, they were -- they were parachuted down.

Q: When was the other time that you used your gun, or one of the other times? You said there were a few occasions.

A: There was -- there was this -- this girl out there, she had been reporting in, and so we were out there, we were trying to eliminate her, but there were too many -- too many Gestapo people showed up, so we had to forget about that one. There was a little shooting going on, but not very much.

Q: Shoot and go?

A: Shooting.

Q: Oh, little shooting, uh-huh. So you were going to -- to kill her.

A: Mm.

Q: Did she ever get killed?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, she got taken care of. I don't remember her name either. I probably didn't know her right name anyway, so --

Q: So she was part of your group, but she had --

A: No, no, she was -- she was telling the Germans about not our group, but some other people --

Q: Other people.

A: -- she had been reporting on [indecipherable] and then some might have been arrested and it was her fault.

Q: But something like that, the elimination of someone, is that something you took upon yourself, or was that -- did that come as an order from someone?

A: That came from upstairs.

Q: And what's that --

A: I mean, well --

Q: How would you hear? What is upstairs?

A: The Freedom Council.

Q: Oh, that came from the Freedom Council?

A: Or close to that. Or close to that.

Q: Okay.

A: Close to that. There was also the -- the freedom no the -- the parachute people. They had a number one man there Flemming Muse. And he -- I think he had authority to do that. Then the -- the communists had a rather large group called BOPA --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- and known as the Borgelige Partisaner.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And they had [indecipherable] part of that [indecipherable]

Q: Okay, mm-hm.

A: And they -- they had, you know, could decide things like that, that's how prized they are.

Q: And would you or someone you knew, how would you get the message that you were supposed to go assassinate, for example, this -- this girl?

A: Well, I -- I don't know how it came down, I only know that these people I was with at that time, his name was [indecipherable] I think it was, and he had gotten word. How he got it, who he got it from, I don't know.

Q: Okay. At this point are you beginning also to do some sabotage?

A: No, I n -- I never did any blowing up and such. I was a guard at some of -- yo-you always had people standing around, watching and I was involved with that, but I didn't handle the explosives, or -- didn't like the smell of it, for one thing. They smell like marzipan.

Q: It smelled like?

A: Marzipan.

Q: Marzipan?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. What else are you doing to resist at this point?

A: Well, we were -- actually, when I got caught we had just gotten a new shipment of -- of bombs parachuted down, they were not very big, but th -- the purpose was to put them under the German trucks because they were short of rubber, and they had a hard time getting tires. So if you could blow their tires to pieces, you know, they couldn't drive their trucks around. So all you had to do is put these things underneath the -- the tire, then when the -- th-the car-drove off, it

would blow the tire up. You will be 40 miles from there in the meantime. So we'd just gotten these -- a shipment down of that, and I was with, I think there were four, maybe five. One was a parachute agent, and he was showing us how to operate, how to use them and all that. But then the -- the door busted open and in came the Gestapo with a machine gun, and all that stuff, and you're told to hit the -- the floor. He ate the special agent's pill, and he died right there [indecipherable]

Q: In what amount of time?

A: A minute? It was almost instantaneous. A minute, two minute. So we never got to use those, but they were used pri -- a little afterwards, those tire bombers. They're only about this big.

Q: The -- the parachute man who committed suicide, wa-was he Danish?

A: That's correct.

Q: Did you have a pill?

A: No.

Q: Why -- why did he do that?

A: Oh, I think he probably had heard what the Germans were inclined to do to parachute people. They were pretty hard on them. So he is buried in Copenhagen.

Q: What was his name?

A: Robert Johansson I think it was. Robert Johansson. Nice guy. Yeah.

Q: How much had you worked with him?

A: Oh, I don't remember. It wasn't that long, he hadn't been there that long, I don't think. I hadn't known him that long, at least.

Q: Did you know he was going to do that if you were caught?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, you know, you know that they had this pill.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I suppose it was up to each individual whether he want to -- to take it or not.

Q: What were the Germans like with you, then?

A: Well, we were the -- I forgot whether three or four -- anyway, we were taken to the place where they did their interrogation, place called the Shell house, used to belong to the old oil -- to the oil company. And then they started the --

Q: Oh, the Shell Oil Company?

A: Shell Oil Company, yeah. Germans had taken -- Gestapo had taken that house over, and used for their headquarters, and they did a lot of their interrogation in that one. So, we spent some time in there, and I can do without that that wasn't very nice. There was a fellow from the southern part of Denmark, spoke both Danish and German, and he would kind of switch you back and forth. So after that was over, I was -- I was sent out to the -- the jail in Copenhagen. And had my own cell there, and then they would -- a couple of days I was pulled out and sent back in to the Shell House for a little more --

Q: What did they do during the interrogation?

A: Oh, they kind of hit you with a -- I don't -- rubber thing, about that -- like a nightstick, but all rubber, hit you over your kidneys, which is all uncomfortable. And then, you know, hit you other places, and kick you a little. Right to the jaw, left to the jaw, whatever they feel like. They're they're - just not very nice.

Q: And how long did that go on?

A: Well, i -- you really don't keep check on the time. I mean, you just hope it's gonna be over with. But I forgot th -- what -- in there four or five times, something like that. And otherwise you sit out yourself, by yourself. So -- and that went on for -- I guess I was in that jail for a month. And then they came there one morning, I don't know, three o'clock, told me to get dressed —get my gear. We went out, got in a bus -- a-a -- this truck, then they took us down. And they took us down to just over the border, place called Flensburg and there were 13 of us, and that -- put us in the jail there for -- oh, I don't know, two or three days. And then they took us by bus to Hamburg to the jail and we were just there one day. And then they took us down to the concentration camp. And then it was strange because normally when you come down there, you get, you know, your prison number at that time was somewhere in the 50 - 60 thousands. Ours was 500, and that was because the 13 numbers were what they called politsi haftling. That means you are under arrest, but your sentence has not been determined yet. So, we were politsi haftling until somewhere around Christmas, and then we became just a -- a normal, regular prisoner. But in the meantime, that helped me because one time my name was on a list, I was told, I forgot, but anyway, I found out that I was supposed to be transferred to one of the work camps, which they were building these trenches so the allied tanks couldn't get in. So you walk around in this water up to your knees or whatever. You never get dry clothes on, and it's cold, it was in the wintertime. So the fellows there usually didn't last very long. So I heard I'd been transferred there once, I didn't like that, so I got permission to go up to the camp office, and I said to the clerk up there that I was politsi haftling, which means I had to be -- available again -- in -- in case Gestapo wanted me back and maybe he better not ship me off cause he could wind up and get in trouble. So he agreed, so he took me off the list, then some other poor bugger got on the list there. Then I really got transferred. But the reason for that was that one of the 13 had found

out afterwards- said we had been sentenced to be hanged, and somehow or other the -- the instruction got lost, and that's the reason why we got into the camp, we got this strange number. The sentence had actually had been pronounced.

Q: What was the name of the camp?

A: Neuengamme.

Q: Did you know that camp existed before you were sent to it?

A: No, no. We didn't know -- really know anything about concentration camps then. There had been some talk that there were camps like that somewhere around, and that was for anti-socials. They had various marks, they had purple, they had red, they had green triangles on your -- on your uniform. They had one camp [indecipherable] Denmark for political prisoners, that wasn't too bad, actually, I understand. But the ones down in Germany that -- that didn't get much publicity that time. After the war, I think that's when a lot was written about it.

Q: And your camp was in your country, or were you --

A: Germany.

Q: It was in Germany.

A: Just outside of Hamburg.

Q: And -- but before we really move on to the -- to the camps, just wondering if you could talk a little bit about why you think the people in your country really sort of came up and in this spontaneous, organized fashion helped rescue so many people? What do you think gave them the desire, the will to do that?

A: You mean to help people get to Sweden?

Q: Yes, particularly that. That two week period but just the ongoing --

A: Well, you know, Denmark had been independent since, I don't know, a thousand years. Never been occupied. And then, naturally when somebody comes in like that, it's going to cause resentment and everything else. So it gets to the point anything you can do that can be anti-German, whether it was help people get to Sweden, whether it was blow a railroad car in the air, whether it was put a bomb on a ship so it would sink, whether it was publish papers, whatever it was. Anything that was kind of anti-German, people will be in favor of. 99 percent, I think, of the people.

Q: And the people who didn't, I mean, how did you feel about them?

A: Well, because there always gonna be some who just sit back and watch life go by, and then there's a certain percentage that will be in favor of the -- of the Germans. A part of that could be people who lived in a part of Denmark that had been German f-from 1864 to 1920. And y-yeah, that was [indecipherable] you could understand kind of, in a way, that -- that there were -- there were certain reasons. But a lot of the other one no, there was no excuse for them, and they really got taken care of after the war, I mean, they were -- lot of them went up in jail for simply being too nice to the Germans.

Q: You haven't really mentioned the king much. Is he someone who inspired you?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And can you talk about that?

A: He was a pretty good guy. He used to ride around every day, and his son was A-one too. They were -- you have to have something to hang on to. And politicians are not the real ones. Look at politicians in France, Laval, Pétain, I mean they -- Laval got hanged, I think, Pétain wasn't -- or almost 100- so he got away. But I mean, there was nothing there we had to look up to Belgium, the -- the king gave up there, Leopold, he wasn't considered much of anything. But in Holland

and Norway, king and queen took off for England and formed exile -- exile governments. They didn't have any in Denmark, exile government in -- in the -- in the -- the allied countries, which was a bit of a handicap in the beginning. But the -- the king proved to be pretty good anti-German, although his wife was German. But I think he was -- he was very good.

Q: How could you tell he was anti-German?

A: It was known from already before the war that he wasn't much in favor of them. I mean, he got a -- he turned 70 -- yeah, he turned 70 in -- in 1940, and he got a very elaborate congratulation telegram from Hitler, and he answered, thanks. Hitler got all teed off. That's not how you thank the -- the fuehrer, just by one word. So it -- it was pretty well known that he wasn't much in favor of -- of the Germans.

Q: Did you yourself ever see him riding his horse?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Can you describe that?

A: Was just -- he wore an officer uniform, and he just rode. Was a red light, he stopped, wait until it turned green. He was very good. And his son the crown prince was trained in the navy, which of course made him much better as far as I was concerned. But he was pretty good guy, too.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: In this period in 1943 - 1944, what would you say is the most difficult thing you had to do?

A: The one specific thing was after I went to Sweden in the fall of ’44 -- no, fall of ’43, I didn’t see my parents until after the war was over, except once. I was in a streetcar and I saw my mother standing, waiting for another one. And it was difficult not to get off and say hi. At that time I hadn’t seen her for about a year, and it would be another year before I saw her again.

Q: Why wouldn’t you get off and say hi?

A: Cause she didn’t know where I was, supposedly. She didn’t know I was back in Denmark, she thought I was in Sweden.

Q: Tell us about that, you -- you went to Sweden, why and what did you do there, and then how did you come back?

A: I went to Sweden in -- after the -- after we had helped the Jews get over at the tail end of, of that one which was in the f-fall of ’43. And then when I was over there I was working in a -- in a lumber camp for awhile, and then I -- I sent a letter to the British embassy in -- in Stockholm. I volunteered for service in -- in the British forces, and I got a letter back asking me to come up for this script, so I flew u -- I -- I took the train up there and -- and met the people in the -- in the embassy, and -- and the problem was that it would take, oh, I forgot, six months before there would be room. They only had, that time, I think room for one or so every night, the flying a Mosquito bomber back and forth. So I figured he -- by the time the war’s over, it’ll be too late to do anything, so I went -- I went back to Denmark, and went back at the re -- the resistance stuff. And then I went -- twice more, I went over illegally to Sweden for whatever reason there was -- somebody had to get over there, and some had to -- had hotel some -- whatever. So I went over

there twice more and came back. So I was over -- all told, I was over there three times, back and forth.

Q: So I -- that actually -- want to ask you a couple things. Just go back to that moment where you can't talk to your mother, does she see you?

A: No. No, she didn't. That must have been in the spring of '44, yeah, spring of '44.

Q: Does she have any idea where you are at that point?

A: She thought I was in Sweden.

Q: So, were you wearing a disguise?

A: No. No, but it was -- you know, you're in the street car, there's a lot of people and seeing one face out of many, she just didn't catch a glimpse of me. And I didn't want to call her, cause I didn't want to cause any -- cau-cause her to get nervous or anything like that. If she figured I was in Sweden, she would figure I was, you know, safe and all that. So that's when I got caught; she found out shortly after. Obviously she got kind of upset, so did my father. But then their -- when I -- when the war was over -- well okay, anyway, that's --

Q: When you come back and you're not s -- well, let me ask it this way. When you come back and you see your mother on the streetcar, where are you living at that point?

A: I was living at a house Lupine (Lupinvej) number nine that belonged to a Jewish family that had taken off for Sweden. After I got caught, that was myself in the house and a young student, and when I got caught, the next day the Germans went out and blew the house up. Unfortunately, they didn't tell the student, and he was sleeping upstairs. And in his bed he went through the window, out on the front lawn, still in his bed, without a scratch. That's rather unusual. Anyway, the house was completely knee high. I'm -- I -- I saw the people after the war, and they rebuild,

and of course government paid for everything, so there wasn't any financial loss as far as they were concerned.

Q: Were you specifically sought after by the Germans? Did they know who you were?

A: Well, when I got caught, and I got out to sh -- to Shell house and the fellow said my name -- by that time it was too late to try to hide it. So I said what do you want, so he said oh, Steen, we been looking for you. Well, they may say that to everybody, just to try to scare you a little bit, but anyway, it di -- it does kind of make you a little nervous. Whether they really did or not, I don't know.

Q: To their mind what -- what -- what were you up to? I mean wh -- why were you a danger?

A: Well, you -- you c -- you got to admit to something. You can't just say that you -- you haven't done anything. So you admit to as little as you think you can get by with. And then hope that they're -- they're gonna buy it. Furthermore, they had -- they were -- they -- they -- they arrested a lot of people at that time, so they were pretty busy, these fella -- these policeman that interrogated you. And they couldn't spend that much time on you, so unless they got something out of you fairly soon in the game, they just usually shipped you down south and leave you there.

Q: So what did you admit to?

A: Somebu -- some with the -- with the papers, and there was one other thing, now what the hell was that? There was one other thing, and I got by with that. It was something in connection with the -- with this -- this parachute guy, cause they kind of tied it in. And he was dead, so he couldn't say anything.

Q: A-And you were caught with bombs?

A: Yeah, we had bombs in the -- in the apartment.

Q: Had you ever been involved in the bombing before?

A: Oh yeah, with those little ones.

Q: Can you just describe a situation where you bombed something?

A: Well, this was with the tires. You -- you put them under the -- the German trucks and then when they -- when they drive over them they blow up and the tire's completely ruined. You know, it's not as exciting as blowing up a factory, anything like that, but they had problem getting enough tires for the trucks, so it was helpful.

Q: Maybe you could take us through it. Wou -- would it be at night? Did you have the bombs in a bag? Where would you go? How would you get them under the tires without being seen? How'd you do it?

A: Well, you -- you try to do it when it's dark. You'd go on -- on the -- on the -- you would go a bicycle if you have the proper lights. And you could go until, I forgot what it was, 11 o'clock in the evening there. So you could drive around, then if you saw one somewhere, you could just stop and stick one underneath and then peddle along.

Q: So there was a kind of random quality to it --

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: -- you might just ride around and see what you could fin -- find.

A: That's correct. When you found one you went after.

Q: And did you go back and check later on to see if they had exploded?

A: No. That wouldn't have done any good anyway, except if -- you would probably put another one underneath them, but no, we didn't.

Q: And how many tires do you think you were able to sabotage?

A: Oh gee, I don't have any idea.

Q: Like five, or 50?

A: I don't -- I -- well, you know, with -- with those things, first of all, you never know when they go off. You can put it underneath and it -- it may misfire. Or it may -- you may be lucky and get four tires, the ones -- if you have those double -- double tires on the truck, so no, I wouldn't have any idea.

Q: What other kinds of assignments were you getting? Were you being asked to go to Sweden and bring things back? Or people back?

A: One time I went over with -- with some plans on -- for some fortifications on the -- on the west coast of Denmark. I went to the -- as I recall it, delivered them to the police commissioner in Helsingborg a fellow name of Palm, and he -- he arranged for them to be shipped on.

Q: Who were they being ultimately sent to?

A: British embassy in -- in Stockholm. Delegation I think it was. British-Delegation.

Q: And when you did go over to Sweden, how would you do it? How would you arrange getting over there?

A: Well, go in one of the boats. We always knew somebody who was going, so -- so just go with them over.

Q: But was it suspicious for just a person to be on a fishing boat in the middle of the evening?

A: Well, the fishermen were there.

Q: Mm-hm. Was --

A: So I came -- oh, one time I came and I went up in a small town called Lanscona. And I didn't have any place to stay that night so I called the Palm up in Helsingborg and he said -- he called me back shortly after, he said, well, the drunk tank is open tonight if you want it. So I went in there and slept in a padded cell that night only time I ever been in one of those. But they were very -- the Swedes were very good about everything, very helpful and did what they could.

Q: And did you ever take any items, other than the -- the maps, the plans for the fortification, over to Sweden?

A: No. No, just o -- what had to go. You didn't have that much room, so you just took what you had to take, had to bring over.

Q: And you -- did you ever bring guns back?

A: No. No, the only thing I brought was that newspaper, British newspaper, which I shouldn't have done. I only did that once.

Q: In your daily life, what were your interactions like with the Germans, once you were o -- active in resisting them, what was it like to run into them on the street and maybe talk to them? What wa -- what was that like?

A: You wouldn't talk to them, for one thing. And the other thing, they were -- they were running around on the -- you know, they were walking around on the street, and -- and you don't do anything special. I mean, you don't want to stand out in any way. Some -- some fellows tried to just stop them and -- and take their guns, you know, steal their gun, things like that, but that didn't always work so well. They got caught, and then they were in trouble. And there was too much of a risk just for a gun. Wasn't worth it.

Q: But on a daily basis, did you feel that you might get stopped and searched and caught? Was that a fear you lived with every day?

A: Well, yeah. You al -- al y -- you always worry about it, of course. Also, because there were these people who would -- they would report people who were in the resistance to the Germans. So you never know whether somebody like reported you in, and you know, you were likely to get picked up. That was one -- one thing you -- you kind of lived with. And that was about the hardest one of them all, because it's kind of a 24 hour a day proposition.

Q: Can you remember a close call that you had, where you were very close to being discovered by the Nazis, besides the newspaper?

A: Not offhand.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't remember.

Q: Was there any sense among the people that you did speak to, who were like yourself, in the resistance, what was the ultimate plan there? What was the goal?

A: Oh take -- have the Germans lose. I mean, everybody was hoping for that, and after the -- after the inva -- I was still out when the invasion happened, and after that started -- that -- that came about, you know, then there didn't seem to be much doubt who was going to win. And after the invasion -- the German police got more difficult, was more active.

Q: More what?

A: There was more active.

Q: More active, mm-hm.

A: Particularly Gestapo fellows. So anyway, I mean, everybody -- everybody I think wa -- was convinced that the allied was going to win.

Q: Can you take us back then, to that night that you were caught? We -- we -- we've mentioned it before, but let's just go back to there. You were with this parachute --

A: Agent.

Q: Agent.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you were going to use these bombs on the tires. And just --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- what happened, the -- the ca -- the police came in, the Gestapo came in and what did they say to you?

A: Hit the floor. So you're down there, you're -- you don't argue when they come in, you know, with a bunch of guns like that pointing at you, you just go ahead, and cooperate, do what they tell you to do. So you get down on the floor and then pretty soon you -- you get the handcuffs. And then the -- this was on the fifth floor, I think, in that apartment. Take you down, put you in a -- in a truck and take you to that Shell house for interrogation.

Q: And did they take the agent with you, even though he had died?

A: I don't know what happened to him. He was still lying on the floor when -- when I left. He is buried in the national cemetery over there now.

Q: So there were a period of time and there were five interrogations, and this went over how long a period of time?

A: Oh, couple, three weeks. Couple of weeks, probably. Maybe three.

Q: And are you see -- seeing anybody else at that time your -- that your fellow --

A: No.

Q: -- fellow [indecipherable]

A: Only that fellow that came with food.

Q: Okay.

A: Then after couple of weeks, another fellow came in, another prisoner come in, so we shared the cell for the last -- I think I was there probably four weeks in that jail, so the last two weeks there were two of us. I forgot -- I think he went -- he went to -- he went to Neuengamme too. He was a baker.

Q: Had you known him before?

A: No.

Q: Hm. Had you prepared in any way to be captured? Mentally?

A: No. I mean, you al -- you always hope you're not gonna you're not going to get caught, but no I don't think you sit down and say, well if I'm gonna get caught, I'm gonna do so and so, think so and so, you don't do that. I think it's simply too scary a thought.

Q: So then what --

A: And you se -- oh, oh, excuse me, but during that period, all the time the -- the Germans would shoot -- execute people, there was one innkeeper, he got caught because he and his family had been receiving some weapons parachuted down. And so he got shot, and I think he had two sons and a son-in-law, all -- all of them got shot at the same time. One of the kids was only 16 or 17. But they were all executed. And the Germans would regularly execute people from the resistance, and they announced it in the -- in the paper, so it was no secret.

Q: Why do you think you weren't ex -- executed?

A: That is something that I will never know. They had to yo -- I mean, we were supposed to -- to get hanged, I was supposed to -- to -- supposedly sentenced to that, and this -- that happened on the way. Why they did that I don't know it -- it -- I know one -- one of the 13 after the war met a guy, a German policeman -- shortly after the war, you know, and this fellow said to him, are you still alive? This chap said, what do you mean by that? He said, Well, we heard you were gone down Neuengamme he sent message that you were -- supposed to hang you down there. And I never -- nothing ever -- and they used to hang people regularly down there. One time they -- they hanged eight Polish girls at one slot -- one time.

Q: Danish police girls?

A: No, Pol-Polish.

Q: Oh, Polish girls, mm-hm.

A: Polish girls. Yeah. Well, the fellow who was the head of the camp got hanged himself eventually, after the war.

Q: Talk a bit about the camp when you got there. What -- what happened when you first arrived there?

A: The first thing that you do is they take all your clothes. Then they shave you, anyplace they can find, and -- and then you get some clothes that doesn't fit you very well. I wound up with a -- with a winter coat that was -- that wa -- must have been like from Poland because it was very thick material and there was like cotton in the middle. And it was nice and warm, but during these long nights when we had these appelles, you stand out there for parade, and you were standing out there for four, five or six hours until -- they had to count everybody, there were 20,000 roughly, in the camp. And y -- if they only counted 19,999, we just stood there until they found the last one. So at least the coat were nice and warm for that. So after they -- they put -- give you some clothes, then you're sent over to some barrack somewhere, and then you had to find a place. There were usually oh, three guys to a bunk.

Q: You say you had to find a place that -- so, you sort of walked in and you weren't assigned a place --

A: No.

Q: -- you had to see if you could sneak in somewhere [indecipherable]

A: You know, you see if the -- well, one -- if there was one only, two people in --

Q: Okay.

A: -- you know. One time I found one with only one fellow in, so I climbed in that one bed, then I found out why he was alone and I got out very quickly.

Q: Why was he alone?

A: Homosexual. So I was out, no time flat. Then we worked -- I think they woke us up at six. Oh, there's been a lot written about that, you know, in -- people with better memory than mine.

Q: Were there other people from the Danish resistance at that camp?

A: The whole police force wound up there for awhile. All the Dane --

Q: [indecipherable] the whole police force?

A: Yeah, all the Danish policemen. They were there for awhile, then they got shipped to another camp. My godparent's son was down there in the same place. I didn't even know he was -- been picked up, but I met him down there one time. So there were some other Danes, but the Danes were all in -- in a number of different camps, they were not all in Neuengamme.

Q: When you found someone you knew, did you try to stick with them, or bunk with them, or --

A: No, but you were assigned to a barrack and you couldn't start running from one to the other. Be -- try to meet them when you can, you know. You had Sunday afternoon off, I think.

Q: Off from what?

A: Work.

Q: What was your work?

A: In the beginning we were keeping some -- they had some -- some -- two big buildings built o- of brick, and that's -- was meant originally as barracks for the -- th-the guards. Then later on they moved the guards outside and then these were used for prisoners. But the basement was used for -- in -- in case of air raids. Not to protect the prisoners, but to make sure that in case a bomb hit someplace the prisoners couldn't run away. So our assignment for awhile was to keep them clean. Then for -- I was switched over one time to make some kind of machinery for volk -- for -- they had a -- a gun down there that the -- the home guard was using, supposedly more

dangerous to be the guy f-firing it than the fellow who was in front of it, cause they blew up all the time. And we were making some kind of a part to that Volksgewehr thing. And then -- oh then I got jaundice, and -- and dysentery and went in -- in hospital and then the war was over.

Q: What -- can you talk a little bit about the other people who were there? You said it wasn't just Danes, who else was there?

A: There were Belgium, Holland, Polish, Russian. I got pretty friendly with a guy from Urkutsk, that's way out in Siberia somewhere. I said Polish, and then there was some Czechs, and no Italians, no Norwegians that I know of, they were in another camp. But there were all told, roughly 20,000 there, and about on average 2,000 died every month.

Q: How did you know?

A: Well, you -- you hear this from the camp office, you know. I mean, there was a -- a f -- couple o-of prisoners work in the camp office, and they were the one that wo -- w -- ha -- have access to information such as that.

Q: Were there Jews in the camp?

A: I don't know it specifically Jews, no. I don't think so. Ours w-were mostly political prisoners which was the red triangle. The green triangle was -- I think yellow was -- was -- was criminal, and there was some religious prisoners down there, because everybody had a sign on them. I had -- like I had a red D, for Danish political, and 67399.

Q: That was your number?

A: That was my number, yeah, after I got out of that politsi haftling.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: 67399, yeah.

Q: And how were the barracks organized? Who was in charge?

A: Some of the prisoners that had been there the longest was what they call camp, kind of camp police kapo -- k-a-p-o, kapos. The kapo we had was a Polish guy. He'd been there -- God, he'd been there a long time, and he was supposed to kind of keep -- keep order in this barracks and make sure everything worked out okay. He had a lot of authority from the -- from the Gestapo people.

Q: Well, what kind of person was he?

A: He wasn't as bad as the Gestapo, but he was not a very friendly sort. It wasn't very easy for him either probably because each -- I imagine each barrack had at least a thousand prisoners. So he had to keep all that in order, and you know, had -- that's kind of a tall order, cause a l-lot of them are pretty rough characters.

Q: When they did execute people, was it done publicly, and were you made to watch?

A: It was usually done Sunday -- see, Sunday we only worked half a day. So there we had the appelle, the counting in the morning and then on Sunday at 12 o'clock. Regular days it would be in the morning and then again at six, at -- at a -- when work finished. But on Saturdays after the appelle was worked out they would hang them before we were excused from so we go back to our camp. Although the -- the Polish girls, they were hanged in the -- in the camp, they had a little jail there, and they took them in there and hanged them all.

Q: And was that done in manner that you could observe?

A: No, you couldn't see them.

Q: Why were they hanged, do you know?

A: No.

Q: Did you usually know why people were hanged?

A: Well, one guy was hanged because he tried to hide. He wa -- he was really a sa -- I think he was kind of half -- half crazy. He had had so much of this camp that he wanted to get away, so he hid in a chimney somewhere. And so we were standing there waiting for this last one to count. Finally they found him, and then next Sunday they hanged him. So that was him. That was the end of that one.

Q: Did you ever consider trying to escape?

A: No. No, by the time you have these dog ruled barbed wire fencing and they were about what, 12 feet high, and you have dogs running around in between, and you have people -- ma-machine guns all over. You had nightlights shining down these -- between the two. No, you don't stand a chance. I don't know of anybody who ever got out of Neuengamme anyway.

Q: So once you got in and you saw that, how did you intend to survive?

A: By surviving. I mean, there's -- we were fortunate in -- in a sense that after a few month we started getting food packages from -- from the Danish Red Cross. And there was -- the beginning there was a -- th-there was soap -- soap in them, there was food in them, there was all kinds of things. But in the beginning the Germans would open up the box, open all the packages and dump everything in -- in a -- in a bowl, so you get your soapsuds, and your salami and your coffee beans all in one nice mess. But then after awhile then they would leave them alone and then they worked out fine. One of the big things was salami, they used to ship us -- God knows how much salami. You can get tired of that if you get too much. But that really is what -- what helped again. And then this -- one time they sent us some clothes, you got a jacket, which was badly needed.

Q: Were the other groups of people, the Poles, the other groups you mentioned, were they getting packages?

A: Not that I know of, never saw anybody get any.

Q: Do you know if the resistance was involved in helping the Red Cross get you this stuff, or was it just the Red Cross on its own?

A: I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised if -- if the people in the resistance hadn't been involved in some of it, but I -- I don't -- I don't know one way or the other for sure.

Q: Is that something where your parents could send you a package?

A: No.

Q: Did they know where you were?

A: We were permitted to write a letter, was every month or every six weeks, and we were told what we could say. You know, I'm only -- I'm fine, how are you, I hope you are fine, good-bye.

Q: Did you write it?

A: Oh yeah. Well, at least it was your handwriting. So they knew you were still alive, that's about all it amounted to.

Q: Was there any one person or couple people that you became particularly close to at the ca -- in the camp?

A: Well, of course, out of the -- the 13 of us that went down at the same time, we managed pretty much to stick together. The minister got shipped to another camp. The one fellow died, but the other one -- the two -- two got moved to another section, but there was about six or seven, and we -- we managed to stick pretty much together.

Q: Were you in the same barracks?

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh, you were?

A: And we -- we came back on the same bus.

Q: Who -- do you remember any of their names? Or, which names do you remember?

A: Well, the fellow that died, his name was Thompson.

Q: That was the parachute agent?

A: No, no, that was one of the 13.

Q: Oh, one of the 13.

A: He was an innkeeper from just south of Elsinore.

Q: He was executed?

A: No, he died of TB.

Q: Oh, he died of TB.

A: I think he died of TB.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: The other ones -- the one called Christenson, he's the guy that had the stroke after the war.

No, I don't remem -- remember their names.

Q: Did you know those men -- they were all men?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did you know them before you went in?

A: No.

Q: You call them the 13, okay. But you were rounded up together?

A: We were --

Q: You were interrogated together?

A: No, we were pulled out of jail together and shipped down south together.

Q: Okay, you were pulled out of jail together, and --

A: I didn't know them.

Q: -- you became a unit when you were shipped down south --

A: Correct.

Q: -- to the concentration camp.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And when were you sent to the concentration camp?

A: When?

Q: Yeah.

A: That must have been in July of ’44, or August. Sometime in the summer of ’44.

Q: But not -- just to get all this clear in my mind then, so you didn’t know each other before, but then you got to know each other as you were shipped down.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Were you all Danish?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Had you all been in the resistance?

A: Right.

Q: Okay. So, you don’t remember their names, but if you could just talk a little bit about how you stuck together when you were in the camp, what small things would you do for each other, or what might you talk about together?

A: Well, like I say, the preferred subject was what are we going to do when we get out. There wasn’t really much to talk about what we had done -- not much to talk about what we’d done during the war. That was kind of a item you didn’t really talk much about. There wasn’t really that much to talk about either what you had done before the war, it was really mostly what -- what you gonna do from now on, when the war’s over, when you get out.

Q: What kept you going when you were in the camp?

A: I don't know, I'm -- I kind of wondered too once in awhile because you see, some people -- I n --6 there was one Danish fellow I knew, tall, strong, big, good looking, he didn't last a month. He just seemed like he -- he collapsed, he just kind of fell apart. And all the small, skinny fellows, you know, that would ca -- kind of hang around. So it has nothing to do with physique.

Q: Mm. Did you pray? Did you rely on your faith?

A: Yeah, and that's where we -- we had that minister, which was very helpful.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: One of the 13 was a minister.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: I can't even think of his name any more, but he was good, he was very, very good. Very nice chap.

Q: What would he do?

A: Well, you know, he would ta -- he'd talk to you an-and cheer you up, and pray a little and things like that. Can't think of his name, but he was there an-and that must have been like in -- in January of '45. The Germans ca -- ca -- I think they collected all the ministers in one particular camp, and he was -- he was shipped down there.

Q: When -- when did you get sick?

A: Oh, it was on March or April of '45. Course, jaundice is something that kind of comes fairly slowly. I mean, it's not like all of a sudden boom. Dysentery kind of comes pretty quick, and I was in so-called hospital for -- oh, I guess it was only three or four days before we were moved with the buses back to Denmark.

Q: So just give me the chronology, do you -- you got sick and then were you taken out of the concentration camp to a separate hospital?

A: No, it was just oo --

Q: You just were in the hospital in the concentration camp?

A: Just one of the barracks, yeah.

Q: Okay. And how sick were you, I mean, were you -- could you get out of bed and walk?

A: Yeah. But you know, yellow jaundice, you're all -- your eyes are yellow, your face yellow and --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and then you -- when you have this dysentery on top of that, that makes it not so good.

Q: So --

A: Besides, they didn't have any medicine for anything.

Q: Right. At what point -- what happens then?

A: Well then, the head of the Swedish Red Cross, a fellow name -- name -- fe-fellow by the name of Bernadotte had made a deal with Himmler, that he would try to negotiate with the allied and get a peace going, and the price for that, Hitler had -- Himmler had to pay was to agree that all Danish and Norwegian concentrace -- concentration camp inmates should be shipped to Sweden until the end of the war. So that's when several white buses came down to the camp. First they collected a bunch of prisoners from other camps in Neuengamme, Norwegian and the Danish. Then the buses came down, and then they took all the prisoners up to a camp just north of the Danish German border, fa -- a place called Froslev So we come up there and we were there for a couple of days and then they took us by bus and they -- and train, we were supposed to go through Copenhagen and over to Sweden. But I didn't want to go back to Sweden. So just

before the -- you get into Copenhagen there's fairly long hill. And I was in the first car, so I went up in the platform and ended up -- said to the -- to the engineer, I want to get off. So he said well, he could slow down at that hill there, which he did, and then I jumped off the train. And then I was in -- in Denmark.

Q: You jumped off the train, did -- does that mean that you fell, and you had to roll?

A: Well yeah, jump. I didn't fall, I jumped off.

Q: You just jumped off and you ended up standing up?

A: No, oh no, no, you roll. You roll a lot. I mean, they're moving fairly fast.

Q: But you were sick.

A: Well, no sicker than I got on the train. Yeah, I had been -- they took us from the camp in Germany, took us across the border to Denmark, put us in this camp down there just over the border. We were there for maybe a week, and then the -- we were gonna go to Sweden. And as we came with these buses o-over the border to Denmark, the first place they took us to was a dairy. We could have all the milk we wanted. And not having had any milk for about eight month, and I drank a lot you really get a tummy ache. It sure tasted good. So then I got off the train in Copenhagen, and s -- I went over to somebody I knew down there and couple of days later I went and got the -- some I.D.. And then I went up to Elsinore and stayed for a few days with a -- with a couple. And then I heard one night the war was over. So I called my parents and then I spoke with them and bought a bicycle, drove home. That was a nice trip. And that was May five, '45. Interesting years.

Q: How did things seem at home, when you got home? How was your mom and dad and your sister?

A: My father was at work and so was my sister, so I called them. My mother was there, she said, what can I do, you want a sandwich? Of course sure I did that. So I had something to eat. Then I -- I went out to the office I used to work, just to say hello and I was back. And they said, whenever you're ready, come on back. So then I went back home again, my father got home. And then I was home for a couple of days, and then they told me to go to the hospital because of the jaundice and that. So I was in the hospital for about a week I guess. And then I was on -- in the -- in the countryside for a week, and then back to work. I think I was back to work within four weeks after I come back from Germany. There wasn't any of the psychological straightening out assistance and everything like that. So I went back. And then I worked for a couple of month, then I heard about that job in England, went over there.

Q: How did you celebrate your homecoming that night with your parents?

A: Well, I guess we just talked. They wanted to know how it had been, and I wanted to know what had happened there, you know. So I'm -- I'm sure we talked until rather late in the evening. But there wasn't any celebration in that sense. There was just -- I guess we were both pretty -- pretty pleased we were still alive.

Q: Had the Germans left?

A: Oh no, they were all over. They were all over the place. No, they didn't leave, but you know they -- they -- the British and the -- and the American came in, and the Germans had given up in all but one very small part of Denmark where they want to fight, and eventually the Russians bumped them out of that Bornholm. But -- so the Germans start -- just started walking -- walking home. Nice to see them leave.

Q: Did people just let them go, or were people angry and did they retaliate?

A: No, they -- they just let them go. A lot of the Germans would buy -- tried to buy food to take home. But the time they get down to the border they just had to leave everything in one big pile.

Q: Why?

A: The -- the -- not to take them back to -- to Germany. For one thing, they were paying with -- with money that the German army had borrowed from the Danish government, which means that in a sense the Danish government was paying for all this stuff. So they didn't want to -- all that stuff to leave Denmark.

Q: And how were people treating collaborators who -- who had survived the war?

A: Well, the standard operation for the women, you cut their hair off. You have them standing on a -- on a truck and you drive through Copenhagen. For the -- for the men, same thing, cut the -- cut them bald and same thing, and then they put them all in jail and you kind of straighten out within a few weeks, you know, who should stay in jail, and -- and who hadn't been that bad, they could let them out. There were -- some of the worst fellows, some of them who would be shooting Danes for instance there was some of that going on, too. They wound up, and the com -- some of them got executed. They were shot. But I don't think there were more than 40 and 50 all told, like that. And then there were some that were put in jail. The German general and the head of the Gestapo in Denmark, people like that, they were -- they were put in jail, they were in for six or seven years, then they shipped them out, back to Germany. So there was a big party that night.

Q: Which night?

A: That night the war was over. You know, you would have all the -- all your doors, your windows open, all the lights you wanted, you can -- you can put candles out in the street if you

want to do that. You could play all the music we want, with the doors open. Could do all those things you couldn't do during the war.

Q: So people did that?

A: Yep. As I recall, my mother had one can of Portuguese sardines she had left. We ate that night, celebration. Yeah, that was some party. And then we were back to work, and then the -- the daily routine started again.

Q: Some way -- I'm not sure exactly when, I think that you were in Sweden and you ran into somebody who recognized you, that you had helped. A doctor and his wife?

A: Oh, ah --

Q: Can you tell that story?

A: Yeah, that was Dr. Erstwag, I think.

Q: Okay. Just tell us that story. How did that happen?

A: Yeah, I met him sometime over there. Oh, I knew he was over naturally, cause I'd helped him get over, but I didn't know where he was, and I met him on the street one day, I don't even remember what town it was. But he wa -- it was nice to see them, th-they both looked -- and the baby was doing well. Started walking and everything else. Little girl.

Q: Was this the couple that had been inside the beer cases?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, th-they went over with -- they went over with a fishing boat, I think.

Q: So you didn't recognize them necessarily, but they recognized you?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what did they say to you?

A: Well, th-they told me they appreciate what I -- helped them get over and all that, and told me how well they were doing and everything else. They were looking forward to getting back before long. Back to Denmark. Then he died shortly after, but I met her years later.

Q: How do you think your country dealt with the war after the war? Did people just push things aside, or were there wounds that really had to be healed somehow? You think it was something that really weighed on people?

A: I think there was a -- a -- quite a lot of people who realized that the people who been resistant had -- had taken some awful lumps, physically, financially. What they did on the physical part of it was built some old age homes specifically for people who had been involved with that. They have five of them, I think, in Denmark now. On the financial part, they examined eventually everybody. That was -- I think it was five years before I ever wa-was checked out and -- to find out whether you have anything anything wrong, any -- any lowered ability of making your living, And things like that.. And if -- decided, I think they decided I was 60 percent unable to work full speed. So then they give you a certain amount of money to make up for that. Well I been working right along, but of course if -- if I hadn't been down there, things might have worked out a little bit better, because you do have certain problems after that. I mean ow -- you don't sleep as good as you -- you normally would. There are -- there are certain disadvantages. But I think they've been very liberal over there in -- in what they've been doing.

Q: Do you have trouble sleeping?

A: Yeah. But nothing compared to what I used to.

Q: What was the problem wa -- before that was so bad?

A: All of a sudden you -- you are back there, in -- in some of it, and -- then you kind of wake up, you know, and you're a little unhappy and takes awhile before you go back to bed -- go back to sleep.

Q: Nightmares. You're talking about nightmares.

A: In a sense, yeah, that's what it is. But eventually, I think, you get pretty much over that.

Q: But you had them for a long time?

A: Yeah. But it doesn't bother me any more now, fortunately. So -- oh, I came out pretty good, I mean. Physically, mentally, everything else, I came out a lot better than a bunch of fellows did.

Q: Is there something I haven't asked that you would like to say?

A: Well, I think I gotta say the government has been very liberal, considerate and -- and everything else like that. Some of the -- some of the natives had a little different attitude, but -- little bit more shortsighted. He didn't help me any, so what good he done for me? But that's a minority. I've been over there, oh, I don't know, 20 times since then, and it -- it's nice to get over there, but it's not like they used to be, I mean, like it was before the war. And I guess it'll never be like that, at least won't -- it won't for me.

Q: Well, how is it different?

A: Oh, because you can't help, you walk around and you get to think, you know, this happened there, and that happened there, you know, those things [indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm. Yo-You can't be there without the war, you're saying?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: The war is always with you.

A: Yeah. Yep.

Q: Okay, and what is this here?

A: That's my passport, issued in 1942 and worth ti -- valid until 1947.

Q: Don't think, let's just double check. And this one here?

A: And this one here is from '47 to '52.

Q: Okay, when is this one here?

A: Ah, when was that? From '50 -- '52 to '58. 1952 to '50 -- '58, yeah. And that was the last Danish passport I had. Then '54, I became a U.S. citizen.

End of Tape Three

Conclusion of Interview