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United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Eric Heinz Bondy

August 30, 2012

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PREFACE

The following 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.

Transcribed by Rita Corson, CSR, RPR, RMR, CRR, National Court Reporters Association.

ERIC HEINZ BONDY

August 30, 2012

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Question: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Eric Bondy on Thursday, August 29th -- is it? Or 30th?

Answer: If I can correct you, that -- Eric is my -- my real name is Heinz. Everybody calls me Heinz.

Q: Aah.

A: And we will get to that probably, but my name was changed when I went in the Army, and from Heinz, Heinz Kristoff Erich (ph) it was changed to Eric H.

Q: Aah.

A: So that if captured or something it wouldn't be clear to the Germans that I was German originally.

Q: And was Bondy your original last name?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Okay. So you were born Heinz Kristoff Erich Bondy?

A: That's correct.

Q: But now today you are Eric H. Bondy?

A: Right. And I'm called Heinz.

Q: And you're called Heinz. Okay. Well, we're very grateful that you've agreed to speak with us. I'll repeat once more that today is Thursday, August 30th, 2012. We are at your home in Gaithersburg, Maryland. And I will start this interview like we do with all

of them. We want to find out a little bit about your earliest memories, your life, your parents, your family, the world that you were born into. So if you, if we can start with a few factual details. The date you were born?

A: June 2nd, 1924.

Q: And did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I had two sisters.

Q: Are they older or younger?

A: They were both older, and they're both dead now.

Q: I see. What were their names?

A: Anna Marie and Olla (ph).

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Q: Anna Marie and Olla?

A: Right.

Q: And how much older were they from you?

A: Three years. There were three years between each of us.

Q: Uh-huh. And where were you born?

A: Where was I born? A place called Gunderstein in Germany.

Q: Gunderstein. And what major city is that closest to?

A: Oh, it's probably 60 miles from Hamburg.

Q: Uh-huh. Northern Germany?

A: Northern Germany.

Q: Northern Germany. And how would you describe your family? What was your father's occupation? What was your mother's? Did you have a large extended family? Tells us about that.

A: I will start with my grandfather, my father's father, who started out as a Jewish peddler with a tray around his neck selling stuff from it, and he walked from what is now Czechoslovakia to Hamburg and established an export/import business and got very rich and very successful. Fortunately, he died before the Nazis could take away all his money and his houses. And it was really his money that provided my parents with the money to -- they were school people. They always had boarding schools. And they got the money from my grandfather to do it. My mother was one of the very early physicians and became a psychoanalyst. She studied with Dr. Freud, and he became friends of the family. I remember that his daughter, Anna Freud, was also a psychoanalyst, used to come and visit frequently and was a close friend of my mother -- of my mother's. So that that's how -- then my father had a PhD in Art History, and they decided to go into education. They believed in what was then a very novel idea and progressive idea that they would have a co-educational boarding school. And as the school grew, they moved from one place to the other until they finally ended up in aplace called Mariendahl (ph), which was a large school, became a large school. I went to school there with about 200 students, and the school still exists in --

Q: In Gunderstein?

A: No, this is in -- it's also in Hamburg, but it's a different place. Gunderstein was the second school they had, and then Mariendahl was the third one. After that, of

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course, the Nazis came in 1933, and my parents were both Jewish, so it was clear that this wasn't going to last very long, and for a while the school continued because we had the Nazi minister of education's daughter in the school.

Q: Really?

A: So that --

Q: What was her name? Do you remember?

A: Her father's name was Kerrl, K-E-R-R-L. I don't remember her name. I was about 10 or 12 at that time. And then my mother decided that the Nazis were going to be there for a long time. Well, my father thought they were just a passing problem. And we prepared to go to Switzerland. And what is all this growling?

Q: I know. I want to interrupt just for a second. No, no, no, it's okay. You can keep the taping going. Just to say that if there's audio on the tape it has some growling. We have too lovely poodles who are guarding Mr. Bondy, and we have a choice of whether or not they are in the room and bark, or whether they're here and just have a low-level growl. So for ambient audio noise, we have preferred the latter choice. So just to give future people who, you know, future listeners, an idea of why the growling is there; it's friendly growling.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Okay. Can we back up just a little bit.

A: Sure.

Q: I'd like to find out something. Do you have an earliest memory, of what you would think would be one of your earliest memories?

A: I was a passionate soccer player, and I remember playing soccer in Germany. And once the Nazis came in, they decided that Jewish kids couldn't play soccer. So my earliest, earliest memory is not being allowed to play soccer anymore, which was a great blow to me.

Q: Of course. For any boy, you know.

A: {Laughter}

Q: Tell us a little bit about your home life. If your mother was a psychoanalyst and your father was, had a PhD in Art History you said?

A: Uh-huh.

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Q: -- and was involved in education, were they at home often? Did you have a close relationship? Were you brought up by nannies?

A: We were pretty close, but they were running a boarding school, which means that we all lived in one big dormitory. They had an apartment at one end, and my sisters and I lived at the other end of the corridor.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And we had a pretty close relationship.

Q: What was your father like?

A: Huh?

Q: What kind of a personality did your father have?

A: It's hard to tell. He was a very pleasant person, had a lot of friends; very serious about education. He was very much affected by his service in the first world war. He was wounded in the first world war. I guess that's how he met my mother was studying medicine in Vienna. And he was transferred, and at one point in order to be near her joined what was called the Camel Corps, and I guess it was what is today Palestine. Of course, one of the problems that comes with being in a boarding school is that you share your parents with a lot of people. Of course, we didn't know any other -- any -- anything else. We had a Bavarian -- I guess she wasn't a nurse -- caretaker, who took care of us while they were busy. All I can remember about her is that she was extremely Catholic, while we were probably extremely nonreligious and, but she was very nice and stayed with us till we left.

Q: About the first world war.

A: Excuse me?

Q: About the first world war, did your father tell you about how he came to be wounded?

A: He was an artillery officer, but he very rarely talked about the war. He talked about meeting my mother and things like that, but did not talk much about the war.

Q: About his experience?

A: One of his brothers was killed in the war.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And the two other brothers, who were very successful. One was called Cacord (ph) who -- I don't know if you're interested in this -- who started a school in

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Germany for Jewish immigrants, prepare them for emigration. He was probably wrong because he felt that they should learn carpentry and various other things.

Q: I'm listening even as I am handing my colleague the writing.

A: He was -- the school -- he was arrested and put in a concentration camp.

Q: The uncle of yours?

A: My uncle, yeah. And eventually, I don't know how he escaped or was released, and walked across Europe and came to the United States and became a full professor at William and Mary, and then after the war went back to Germany and became the head of the Hamburg University.

Q: Unusual on many counts.

A: Huh?

Q: That's an unusual destiny on many counts.

A: Yes.

Q: You know, very few Jews went back to live in Germany after the war, and to have such a prominent place in the life of a university and the city is --

A: I remember that he also when he went back he wrote a -- what you call those columns where you answer people's problems in the newspaper?

Q: Oh, sort of an agony aunt. He would do that?

A: Yeah, he did that for years.

Q: Did he enjoy it?

A: I guess so, yeah.

Q: Did you ever read his columns?

A: No.

{Laughter from both}

Q: I'm trying to get a sense of how German your family was. You mentioned just briefly your grandfather had come from Czechoslovakia, which wasn't Czechoslovakia --

A: No, it wasn't.

Q: -- until 1918.

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A: Well, where he came from was what's called Bohemia then and was part of the Austrian Empire.

Q: Was he German speaking?

A: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: He was from an German area in Bohemia.

Q: And your mother was from Austria?

A: My mother was born in Austria. She took her medical training in Czechoslovakia and, but she was Jewish and she spoke perfect German.

Q: And do they see themselves more German than Jewish?

A: Never spoke Jewish. I never learned Jewish.

Q: Never learned Yiddish?

A: Yiddish, no. Never spoke anything but German, and later French, and that's it.

Q: Did you -- when the Nazis came to power, you would have been nine years old.

A: In 1933, I was 9 years old.

Q: That's young, but would it -- young for the question I'm going to ask, but do you remember your parents having discussions about the Nazis coming to power?

A: Oh, yes, yes.

Q: What was the tone of those discussions? Did they talk amongst themselves or did they talk to you about them?

A: Well, they explained antisemitism, which was a very strange concept to me, partly because I'd been brought up without any religion and didn't really realize that I was Jewish until I was probably ten years old. They talked about the danger of the Nazis and that they might have to do something about it, leave, or -- and they -- my mother was a psychoanalyst, so they believed in talking to children very openly, and so we pretty much knew by age 10 what was going on.

Q: Do you remember how your sisters reacted? Did you talk amongst the siblings about this?

A: My oldest sister was six years older than I was.

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Q: So she was a teenager.

A: And she was much more conscious when we left Germany of leaving her home and leaving her, and she had about the time she was 18, she was engaged to a young man who came with us to America later on, and she started a school

also, so --

Q: What were the other kids in the school like when the Nazis came to power? Did you feel that in the classroom?

A: The school, they were anti-Nazi and very protective of my parents. I don't think -- at least that's a long time ago -- I don't think any of them turned out to be Nazis. I know that one or two joined the SA in order to protect the school, but we didn't really run into Nazis until probably 1935 when the State started appointing teachers to the school, and they were of course Nazis.

Q: You said this was a private school?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Okay. And it was largely funded by the money your grandfather had earned?

A: Well, yeah, until the school started, and then it was funded by tuition.

Q: Yeah. And you said he died before his --

A: He died before -- I think he died in 1933, which was just the beginning of the Nazi time in Germany, and they did not -- any Jewish push did not start until one or two years later.

Q: Let's back up a little bit later. I didn't realize you knew him. What kind of relationship did you have with your grandfather?

A: Very little. He died when I was nine or 10. I knew he had a beautiful house in Hamburg, as we visited occasionally, and my mother's mother -- my original grandfather was blind and died early.

Q: Your maternal grandfather?

A: My maternal grandfather. She remarried and eventually died in Theresienstadt, both she and her husband.

Q: Your grandparents, Your step-grandfather and your grandmother?

A: And my grandmother, yeah. I had -- it was amazing, I had two cousins. He was a chemist, and she was a social worker. They went to Theresienstadt for six years, and he survived because he was in charge of delousing, and she survived because she

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took care of one of her children. But they told these stories; it always amazed me that every morning she would knock on his window to let him know that she was still alive. And they came to this country and had a very successful life here. He came -- he worked for, I forgot what company in Pittsburg, a chemical company, and did very well.

Q: Was it Dupont?

A: I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

Q: Was it Dupont? Was it Dupont?

A: No. No. It was something, somebody else in Pittsburg, I don't remember the company.

Q: Okay. Let's go back then to when your parents become increasingly concerned about that the Nazis have come. Your father thinks it's passing. Your mother thinks, no, they're going to be here for a while. How did things evolve? How did they develop at the school and in your parents' plans?

A: Well, by that time, by 1935, Jews were not allowed to direct schools anymore, and my mother planned that we would go to Switzerland, and there were a lot of Jewish refugees in Switzerland. And my parents started a school. It was in a place called Gland, which was about halfway between Geneva and ?Lausanne?.

Q: G-L-O-N?

A: G-L-A:-N-D.

Q: Gland. Okay.

A: Gland. And in the beginning the school was made up mostly of German refugee kids who had escaped to Switzerland, and the school was quite successful, but we stayed there on the -- three years, and then in 1936 we came to the United States.

Q: I'm a little bit confused by the dates.

A: 1938. I'm sorry.

Q: All right. Do you remember anything about your leaving Gunderstein? Do you remember any details about when you left or how you left?

A: I was two or three years old.

Q: No, I meant when you left Germany to go --

A: When I left Germany, yes, we were very worried about getting over the border into Switzerland. I remember that.

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Q: Did you go by car?

A: Huh?

Q: Did you go by car?

A: We went by three different cars. Had very little trouble at the border. We claimed that we weren't Jewish because they were letting -- I can remember that I was very embarrassed because somebody asked me to take down my pants to prove that I wasn't Jewish, and I was only about 10 or 12, so it was very embarrassing, but probably worth it.

Q: {Laughter}

A: And we started a school in Switzerland.

Q: What I'm interested in is the detail of leaving Germany. Why would it have been three cars?

A: We took some other Jewish students with us, and we thought that the Swiss would be more likely to let us in if there were small groups rather than one --

Q: Larger group?

A: -- larger group.

Q: So it wasn't three cars in a row?

A: No, it wasn't three cars in a row. We went at different times across the border. The Swiss were very anxious in those days about letting too many Jews into the country.

Q: Were you and your parents and sisters in one car or were you split across the three?

A: I was in a car with my father and one sister, and my mother was in a car with another sister.

Q: And were you concerned? Do you remember if you were concerned about whether they'll make it?

A: Oh, absolutely. But that was a time of great concern anyway, all the way around.

Q: Did your parents have assets?

A: Assets?

Q: Uh-huh.

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A: They had inherited a fair amount of money from my grandfather, but when you left Germany in those days you were allowed to take a thousand dollars and -- a thousand marks, I guess it was -- and everything else was confiscated.

Q: So they had inherited money, but did they have a house of their own? Did they have a building?

A: All that was lost. We had some friends in Switzerland who helped in the beginning until the school got started, but we had almost no money at all.

Q: Okay. And while you were in Switzerland was there discussion of what was going on in Germany?

A: Oh, yes, of course, particularly since most of the students were from Germany and had relatives in Germany and relatives in concentration camps, and it was always discussion of what was going on in Germany.

Q: Had those students come from your school, your parents' schools, the ones --

A: Some of them did. Some of them were children of people who had come to Switzerland and --

Q: And one question that kind of goes back a little bit: Your mother, as a psychoanalyst, did she have her own practice?

A: She never practiced.

Q: She never practiced?

A: She practiced her trade in the school by seeing every child -- hey, stop growling -- she -- she -- the schools really were partly successful because she was there and working with every child --

Q: Individually?

A: -- in the school.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. 1938, why would your parents decide to leave Switzerland? It was a safe country.

A: There was several reasons. One is that the Swiss were very dubious about having Germans, and they were sending people back to Germany at the time. Secondly, our visa had run out, and we were actually very lucky. In those days if you were Jewish you had a "J" in your German passport, and American immigration laws in those days meant that if you were Jewish it took three or four more years before you could get, while they were perfectly happy to take non-Jewish Germans, and

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we had a friend at the German Consulate in Geneva who made sure that we had passports without a "J" in it, which gave us an early immigration visa to America.

Q: I see. I see. So for all those reasons -- so that when you left, do you remember leaving Switzerland?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you leave?

A: We went by car to France and took a ship -- I believe it was ?La Sauve? to the United States.

Q: Did you speak French at the time?

A: I spoke pretty good French then because I'd lived in the French part of Switzerland for two years.

Q: And who was on this trip? Was it just your parents and sisters at this point?

A: There were two other former students who came with us.

Q: And your sister's fiancé?

A: And my -- he had already -- he was non-Jewish, and he was able to get a visa for America, so he was already in America by the time we got here.

Q: Going back to when you were still in Germany and then also in Switzerland, your school had non-Jewish kids in it?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: But was your social life confined to the people in the school? Did you have any other contact with Germans, non-Jewish Germans outside of the school?

A: Yeah. Of course, I was very young, but, as I said, I played soccer a lot, and we played other teams from other parts of Germany, and people came in from the area. There was no prejudice against Jews at the time. If there was, it was not apparent, and so we had a lot of Germans who would --

Q: By the time you leave Europe you're in France --

A: Switzerland.

Q: Switzerland. And then you go to France. And then --

A: Well, we just drove through and sailed from France.

Q: Did you feel German anymore?

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A: I didn't. I think was too young to really feel German. My sister, my oldest sister felt very much that she had lost her home when she left. I didn't really. I never felt particularly German, and having learned French in Switzerland, and so I actually all my life I haven't felt particularly German?

Q: Your language, you know, how you spoke with your parents.

A: German.

Q: German. Until the end?

A: Until my sister's children would scream, "English, please," when we were talking German, so that we eventually started talking German. My parents always had a very strong accent because they'd left when they were already adults, and I guess I had a minimal accent so.

Q: Well, I mean, the value of having another language in the house is the kids never understand what you're saying. And sometimes that's important. Where did you come to the United States? Where did you arrive, and where did you settle and why?

A: We arrived at New York.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And at first all six of us lived in one hotel room.

Q: Do you remember the name?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember where?

A: I just remember that there were six of us in the hotel room. {coughs) -- excuse me.

Q: That's okay. Do you want some water?

A: No. I'm all right. I'll get some in a minute. And I was -- I was sent to an awful school and didn't like it at all.

Q: Was this in Manhattan?

A: I was in -- it was a -- I can't remember what kind of school it was. I was only there for about six months.

Q: Was this in Manhattan?

A: It was in Manhattan.

Q: It was Manhattan.

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A: But my parents very soon started a school in Windsor, Vermont.

Q: Aah,

A: The school was called the Windsor Mountain School. It was called the Windsor Mountain School all the way through until it closed in 1987 or '86, or something like that.

Q: And how did they come to choose Vermont as the place to have the school?

A: They had various friends, and one of them was a writer named Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who was quite a famous writer at the time, and she lived in Arlington, Vermont, and said there was this place that would be very good for the school. So we moved to -- the school then eventually moved to Manchester, Vermont, and then to Lenox, Massachusetts.

Q: To Lenox, Massachusetts? That's quite a change. I mean, it's quite a change from city life in New York to, I assume, town life in Vermont.

A: We, I guess, were never really invested in New York, and plans were always to move out back into the country, so --

Q: So it didn't feel like much of a change?

A: It didn't feel like much of a change, huh-uh.

Q: What do you remember, and what can you tell and describe about those years right after you came, from 1938 through, through -- we'll come to the time when you become a Ritchie Boy. But, you know, you're a teenager now, and you have American society.

A: Well, I went to a local high school because our school wasn't working yet. Then I went to the Windsor Mountain School for my last two years of high school. I had a scholarship at a place called Wagner College in Staten Island, but after three months, because I was a German National, they asked me to leave, and through various friends, and because I was a great soccer player, I got accepted at Swarthmore, and I stayed in Swarthmore for four years and graduated from Swarthmore.

Q: I think much better than Wagner College.

A: Much better than Wagner College, yes. And then I was the, I think, the first -- this was after the war of course, and they had to take the veterans. I got a master's degree at ?Bridmall?, which I think I was the first man to get a degree in Bridmall.

Q: What was your degree in?

A: Modern European History.

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Q: As a kid, well, sort of a young teenager adolescent coming to American, do you remember your first impressions of what this place was like, what the people were like, what society was like?

A: Very hard to remember. I think I was most worried about learning the language and learning to fit in. It wasn't that difficult because when the Windsor Mountain School started, there were only about eight students. It later became much larger, so that we all had sort of a ready-made --

Q: But before then you were in this school which wasn't successful for you.

A: I was only there for about six months. It was a Lutheran school, and it was terrible.

Q: Why?

A: Huh?

Q: Why?

A: I can't really remember why I hated it, but I think it was regimented it, and --

Q: Was it strict?

A: It was strict, and I didn't think we were learning anything in the classes. And, of course, by the time I was 15 or 16, I'd been through a fair amount of changes in my life, so that I was probably more conscious of the world around me than the people my age there, and that kind of bothered me.

Q: Could be very lonely.

A: I was lonely, because I didn't speak English very well.

Q: Yeah.

A: This was three months after we arrived in this country.

Q: You mentioned that your parents had the friend in Vermont who was a well known writer. Did they have a circle of people already in the United States that were part of a social circle?

A: They had, for instance?Tomus Mun? was a friend of theirs, and various other writers. One of the first students was the daughter of Karl ?Sutmeyer? who was a German writer, and there was a whole group of German and American intellectuals who supported the school and they helped us get going.

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Q: Well, it's unusual in many ways because most people who came in the United States didn't have such a circle, and it suggests that -- I don't mean the term in any negative way -- but an elite kind of social circle that had come from Europe.

A: It certainly was easier for us than for many other German refugees. I don't -- you were probably not alive in those days, but there was a very strong antisemetic strain in America at that time.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And coming from Germany, that was particularly --

Q: You felt it?

A: Oh, yeah. It was -- it wasn't clear at Swarthmore, which is a Quaker school, and therefore obviously not -- but there was antisemitism in the area where we lived and you could sort of sense it. Maybe we were overly sensitive about it. I don't know.

Q: Well, the question I would have would be, did you remember instances where you could see it? You know, things like that are very hard --

A: Just remarks, but nothing physical or people would talk about kikes or something like that.

Q: They would say such things?

A: Huh?

Q: They would say such things, using those words?

A: That's how I learned that word. It was somebody -- and I can remember asking somebody what does it mean, and they explained it to me.

Q: Yeah, something that at that time was socially acceptable. No ostracism.

A: And it really is a big change in this country from the antisemitism that existed at that time to the pretty much total acceptance that exists now.

Q: Do you remember when you felt that change happen or was it really gradual?

A: No, it was gradual. And, to be honest with you, I never felt particularly Jewish. The only reason that I would tell people that I was Jewish is that I felt to explain what the Germans did and that I wasn't ashamed of being Jewish. But most of my life nobody asked, and I was always blond and not particularly looking of any kind of -- so that it never -- in many years it was never mentioned. I mean, and the fact that we were not religious, of course, made a big difference.

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Q: Well, you anticipated one of my questions, which was did what you experience, you know, being Jewish whether, whatever relationship you would have to it, the outside world in Germany certainly, you know, shaped your destiny.

A: Absolutely, yeah.

Q: And I wondered whether or not you felt more interested in Judaism as a result, where you may not have been.

A: Not really.

Q: Not really?

A: My parents were, I guess what was called then free thinkers and had absolutely no religious -- I mean, I don't think I ever heard them talk about God or any kind of religion. And it wasn't until the Nazis that the Jews became a race, you know. And so that when I grew up it was a religion. And since we weren't religious, then it didn't play any part in my life really.

Q: Are there other things that you think are important for someone to know about your early years here in the US as a young teenager going to the school, meeting American kids, being exposed to this different environment?

A: When you're young enough you adopt very quickly. I guess I was 13 or 14 when I came here, and really adopted very fast to -- and of course we all wanted to adopt to the American. I remember that we made a point of speaking English and not somehow standing out as immigrants.

Q: What kind of contact did your parents have with the relatives who stayed behind in Germany?

A: We had very few relatives that left behind in Germany. As I said, my mother's mother died at Theresienstadt. There were -- my mother's brother and his wife fled the Nazis in Austria, and then in Czechoslovakia, and they went to Romania, and then decided they weren't going to run anymore and killed themselves. They had two

adolescent children, two boys, who somehow made their way. One of them came to this country as a -- he was kind of a language genius and became a professor at ?Broome? The other one had a very -- he went from -- he went to England during the war, joined the Czech Air Force, got shot down over Italy, spent two years in a camp, went back to Czechoslovakia after the war, got caught by the

Communists.

Q: Oh, my God.

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A: Who were suspicious of him because he had served in the Czech Air Force. With the help of Eleanor Roosevelt, Sinclair Lewis, Dorothy Thompson, various other people, we got him out of Czechoslovakia, and he taught at my school for the next 15 years.

Q: Amazing. And what was his name?

A: Huh?

Q: What was his name?

A: ?Getivena?.

Q: ?Getivena??

A: Yeah. I think he wrote a book or somebody wrote a book about his very difficult life.

Q: It certainly sounds that way. When he was shot down in Italy, he was in an Italian prisoner of war camp?

A: He was in an Italian prison of war camp.

Q: Which is probably why he survived it.

A: That probably was a lot better than a German prisoner of war camp.

Q: What did you study at Swarthmore? What would you graduate in?

A: European History.

Q: Okay. So your bachelor's --

A: Modern History.

Q: So your bachelor's and your master's were in gold subjects?

A: Yeah. I wrote a -- my master thesis was about the Yalta Conference.

Q: Oh, really. How interesting. How interesting for lots of reasons. Why did you choose that? Why did you choose modern European history?

A: Well, I guess I was very interested in what was going on in the world. I had spent, oh, four years in the Army, and that made it even more important for me to know what was going on. At one point I had wanted to teach modern history, but --

Q: Okay. Now, I'm a little bit confused by chronological. You arrive in 1938. Let's say, between '38 and '39, you get settled from New York to Windsor, Vermont. At that point it's 1939, World War II happens, Poland is invaded. Your parents set up

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the school in Vermont. For two years to go to a local school, and then you finish your high school in, at your own parents' school.

A: Right.

Q: That would be what year?

A: Probably '42 or '43 somewhere around there.

Q: Okay. So your college life is post-war?

A: Well, I had one year in college before I joined the Army.

Q: And that was at the Wagner College?

A: First, I was half a year at Wagner College and the other half at Swarthmore.

Q: I see. That's was the bridge I wanted to come to. So you have that half year at Wagner. You transfer to Swarthmore. Why don't you finish the college, the full four years at Swarthmore?

A: I did.

Q: You did?

A: Yes.

Q: At once? No, you interrupted it.

A: I interrupted it. I had three and a half years, four years in the Army, and then I went back to Swarthmore.

Q: Okay. Why did you interrupt it? Was it your choice?

A: I was 18, and I loved skiing, and somebody told me if you join the mountain troops you'll do a lot of skiing. So I volunteered for the mountain troops, which were in a terrible place called Camphill, Colorado, and I spent about eight months there until I was transferred. I suddenly got orders to transfer to Camp Ritchie.

Q: Tell me, tell me a little bit about those eight months in Colorado. Why was it terrible?

A: It was cold. The Army had just started to train mountain troops and didn't really know what they were doing. The camp itself had probably 100 wood stoves, which gave everybody which stayed -- the smoke stayed in

the camp, and we all got rheumatism and various bumps and bruises and --

Q: So it was cold and not well heated, not efficiently heated?

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A: Each barrack had a stove at the end that spewed out, was a wood stove, and was not very warm in the barracks, and we never did any skiing. We hiked a lot with backpacks, and I was very glad to get out of there.

Q: What I remember from my reading of the US military forces in World War II is that before it had been much more of a professional army, and World War II brought in civilians, and in many ways was a great leveler, or people from totally different backgrounds were thrown together.

A: That's correct.

Q: Did you experience that?

A: Oh, yeah. When I first went to the mountain troops, for instance, most of the people were college guys who, people who had started college, wood skiers, and volunteers, and then they didn't get enough people. And they started send draftees, for instance, from Georgia and various other southern states who were absolutely totally miserable. I can remember that this one guy, he was a sharp shooter and was very proud of it, but it was so cold that you had to wear gloves, and he refused to wear gloves, and his hands kept freezing to the trigger, and we tried to explain it to him. But eventually he went to the hospital because he had, was just one of those --

Q: It's a detail, but it ends up being very crucial for somebody who was a sharp shooter.

A: That's right. And he couldn't do it without gloves, and he didn't feel he could.

Q: Were you the only one who came from Germany who was in that mountain camp?

A: I don't know.

Q: Did you guys talk much about with one another? Did you get to know one another very well?

A: Oh, we got to know each other, but at that time I spoke perfect English. And in those days the Army didn't want any noncitizens.

Q: Were you a citizen by that time?

A: No, I became a citizen of Leadville, Colorado, which was right near the camp. And I was -- I guess I was 18 or 19 when I became a citizen.

Q: Did it mean something?

A: Huh?

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Q: Did it mean something when that happened?

A: I'd been living in the United States for a while, and being in the Army, it was nice to be a citizen, but it wasn't a terribly big thing.

Q: And now you say Camp Ritchie happened. It sounds like that transfer sort of fell from the sky.

A: Yes, it did.

Q: So someone in the Army must have known your background.

A: Somebody found out I'm sure, and there were -- when I talked to the people at Ritchie, there were a lot of people like that. So I was younger than most because many of the German emigrees were older when they came to this country. They also were suddenly called out. Somebody in their service records found that they spoke German or French, and so we got transferred to Ritchie.

Q: So now where in Ritchie. Tell us what Ritchie was, where it was.

A: Ritchie --

Q: As much detail as you can.

A: Ritchie was a very strange camp. It was near Baltimore. Actually, it was in the Catoctin Mountains, and almost everybody had a different mother tongue than English. Many of the people were older than I was. And it was -- we learned how to interrogate prisoners of war.

Q: Well, if you could walk me through a few, some of the details. Do you remember what it was like when you got there? Who you first talked to, some of the officials, how they put in one place rather than another place?

A: All right. I don't really remember much of that.

Q: Okay.

A: It's 50 years ago.

Q: I know.

A: Ritchie was more comfortable than the --

Q: Colorado?

A: Colorado. And it was strange because people either spoke French or German or Japanese, and there was relatively rigorous training in how to interrogate people, what not to do, for instance. In the three years that I interrogated people, I never touched

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a German prisoner, even when I interrogated a concentration camp guard that you wanted to rip apart with your hands, we never touched them, and I don't think any of the other interrogators ever touched German prisoners.

Q: So that was something that you learned very early on? That was one of the rules?

A: Absolute rules. Don't touch. You can play whatever intellectual trick you want to play on them to make them talk, but you can't touch them.

Q: Can you remember anything else about that training, how to become an interrogator, a prisoner of war interrogator?

A: There are two things: You had to learn the makeup of the German army, what divisions, who was commander, what division, and so on. And they were very strict about not torturing anybody ever. I can show you a picture of --

Q: Sure. I'd love to see it.

A: -- to prove that I was young once.

Q: {Laughter}

A: That's me.

Q: Where? Which one?

A: (Indicating)

Q: Oh, my.

A: These are German prisoners.

Q: So this is when you're already over in Europe?

A: Oh, yes. Yes.

Q: Now, when you -- okay, so the training lasted how long?

A: Eight weeks.

Q: And what kind of -- do you remember what kind of a feeling you got there? Were you -- were you enthusiastic about this assignment? Did you feel it had some particular meaning?

A: I thought that I was going to be able to do more -- I felt very strongly, having come from Germany, that it was all -- our views were passivists, that I couldn't let other people do it for me because it didn't, didn't seem right at the time. So, as I said, I volunteered. Once we were finished with Ritchey, we were assigned to various

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divisions as a team. I was in the 79th Division and stayed with the 79th Division all the way through Europe. You can see where we went somewhere here.

Q: Okay. So can you tell me a little bit about --

A: See.

Q: Okay. You were -- it looks here on this map that you come from the English Channel through France.

A: We came through the English Channel. We landed in Normandy.

Q: On D-Day?

A: D plus 18 hours. So it was close.

Q: So was it not even a full day after the first landing?

A: No, that's right.

Q: Can you tell me what you saw when you --

A: A lot of dead people. And I'd never seen dead people before in my life, so --

Q: I can't imagine what the feeling -- I would have been scared out of my wits.

A: I was. I was. Two things. Two things that I remember very well is crossing the channel. I was extremely seasick. It was small boats, a small flat-bottom boat, and I can remember that somebody said there's an German plane that's going to attack us. I said, "Okay. I hope it hits us." I was so seasick, so --

{Laughter by both}

Q: Did you know that you were part of this invasion of Europe?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: When did they tell you?

A: We -- because I was an interrogator by that time, we were informed probably three weeks before the landing what day the landing would be and where we would be landing. Of course, we weren't allowed to stick our nose out of the camp after that --

Q: Of course.

A: -- and it was heavily surrounded. It was in, I think it was in South Hampton. And so we knew. And actually the landing was supposed to be a day earlier than the 6th of June, and --

Q: Hang on just a second.

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{interview interrupted}

Q: This is a continuation of the USHMM interview with Mr. Eric Heinz Bondy. And we were talking about, about the landing at Normandy and when you learnt of it and how the camp was closed afterwards, presumably to prevent news of this leaking out, and I interrupted you in the middle of you telling me.

A: What was I saying? Do you know?

Q: I think it was something about the boat going over.

A: Oh, yeah. I was very sea sick on the boat, and the landing itself was kind of traumatic because I had never seen a lot of dead people, and there were a lot of dead Americans, either in the water or on the beach, and that was the beginning of about a year and a half of warfare.

Q: What happened to you? What were your experiences?

A: What were the experiences?

Q: Yeah, after you landed. What happened next?

A: Oh, we were very busy. The idea was that German prisoners would talk best if you talked to them within ten minutes of their capture 'cause they were psychologically still traumatized. So we were very close to the front lines always, and we started right away interrogating prisoners.

Q: So you didn't face combat? Even though you were close to the front lines, you weren't involved in combat?

A: Not actually. We always carried guns and occasionally somebody was shooting at us, and we would shoot back, but we were not combat soldiers.

Q: Do you remember the very first person you interrogated?

A: No. I ended up interrogating probably, oh, two or three thousand people over the next two years.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

A: So I don't remember them too well. I can remember that if somebody didn't want to tell me what I wanted to know, I would say, well, see that solider at the door. He's from Poland. He just lost his parents in Poland. Would you rather talk to him or to me? And they usually would rather talk to me.

Q: Do you have a memorable interrogation, you know, somebody who, you know, from those 2,000 that you would have interrogated?

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A: I have to admit that I had pretty strong feelings about the Germans, and particularly ranking officers. I remember probably -- there was nobody who was really exciting. There was one general who knew the division commander of the division I was in. They had somehow gotten together, and he was very upset by the fact that I treated him like everybody else. And the general came down to say hello to him, but we didn't treat him any better than anybody else.

Q: What can you tell us about those interrogations?

A: About what?

Q: About the interrogations, about -- you mentioned that your own feelings were pretty strong.

A: Well, where I was, the information we were looking for was usually pretty simple, like, what division are you from, what orders did you have to attack, where were you supposed to attack, how many people were there. I mean, they were all very direct questions connected to the tactical situation.

Q: Military questions?

A: Military questions.

Q: Do you remember the place where you had your first interrogation? Was it in France?

A: It was in France, yeah.

Q: Was it close to Normandy? Was it in Normandy?

A: It was probably in Normandy, yeah.

Q: Yeah, did you meet any soldiers your own age?

A: German soldiers?

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh, yeah. The Germans by that time had lost a lot of people on the Russian front, and they were drafting 17, 16, sometimes 15 year olds into the Army. So there were a lot of people younger than I was. One of the things that we did as an interpreter -- as an interrogator, we were very conscious that the Germans were rank conscious. And I was allowed to wear any kind of button up to Major, which on an 18-year-old was a little iffy, of course, and we finally settled in the end of wearing US buttons that just said US on the shirt. It did allow me to go eat in the officers' mess occasionally.

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Q: But you say it was because the Germans were rank conscious that you were allowed to wear these buttons. Did that mean that -- did that mean that in the interrogation situation somebody who would have been higher ranking than you sees this button and then is more likely --

A: More likely to talk. The US button sort of represented some kind of a special troops to the Germans so that -- but there were Germans when I first started, and it was a corporal who said they wouldn't talk to a corporal; get me a lieutenant; I will talk to him.

Q: Did they know that you were Jewish?

A: No.

Q: Was there any time in the interrogation that you would reveal anything about yourself?

A: No.

Q: Did you, did you ever interrogate anybody who was close to where you had come from, from Gunderstein or –

A: Yeah, not really. I once interrogated somebody who had been at the school in Germany.

Q: You're kidding?

A: And -- but that was about as close as I got to --

Q: And did they talk about your parents?

A: They asked about my parents.

Q: So they knew who you were?

A: I explained to them who I was.

Q: Were your feelings any different to the 15 and 16 year old than to the higher ranking officers?

A: Not really. They were all Germans to me.

Q: When did the conversation or the interrogation ever touch on what the concentration camps were about?

A: Most of these people didn't know very much. They knew they existed, but I did, after the war, spend a short time at Dachau interrogating guards and people there, and it looked just like those pictures that you've seen.

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Q: So is that what you were referring to earlier when you said you couldn't touch anybody, even if he had been a

camp guard and you would have wanted to tear him apart?

A: Yes.

Q: So this was from Dachau?

A: That's right.

Q: Do you remember the names of the persons THAT you interrogated?

A: Huh?

Q: Do you remember the name of any of these people?

A: No.

Q: No. Do you remember what they were like, the kind of demeanor they had?

A: Very different, you know. Hundreds of them. Some were arrogant Nazis; some were country boys who didn't know any political consequences; some were old-time Army guys who would follow orders no matter what. So it was a great deal of difference. Towards the end of war, as I said, they were 16, 17 year olds.

Q: Did this change you?

A: The war?

Q: The experience of having been an interrogator.

A: I think that the war probably changed me, yes. Maybe I grew up a lot quicker than I would have otherwise.

Q: What do you mean by that?

A: That maybe I was more serious about the things I was doing than I would have been if I'd just been a 21 or a 22 year old in college.

Q: Did your parents know that this was your job?

A: Yes.

Q: What did they think of it?

A: They were mostly worried about whether I was going to get hurt or not. I think that was probably the most concern who had soldiers who were near the front lines. And one of the problems was that there were no telephones and you had to write e-mail letters. I had one, which was special.

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Q: Oh, my.

A: I thought I had one, but maybe I don't. These were e-mails.

Q: These were -- are these telegrams?

A: No, these are letters.

Q: V-mails?

A: Photographed and then sent by e-mail, or whatever the --

Q: It says a V-mail, like Victor.

A: That's what my parents would be getting.

Q: I see. And it's in English. And was it this size?

A: No, it was --

Q: That was the original size?

A: That was the original size, but it was sent this size, in that size.

Q: And this is almost like a quarter of an 8 1/2 by 11 piece of paper. And this is an example of that.

A: Yeah.

Q: I see. That's very interesting. And you have some original documents as well. I see there are --

A: No.

Q: -- about the school?

A: That's something about the school. And that's a document says I was wounded in action.

Q: What happened?

A: I didn't get in the fox hole quickly enough, and I got hit in the foot.

Q: Oh, my goodness. And you got a Purple Heart?

A: I got a Purple Heart, which I didn't pick up until at the end of the war. People would -- you had to have a certain number of points to get discharged, and Purple Heart would get you five points, so I made sure that this is -- I made sure that I had this letter to get my five points so that --

Q: So you could get discharged?

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A: -- I could get discharged. But I spent almost a year after the end of the war in military government in Germany.

Q: What was that like?

A: Couldn't find anybody who wasn't a Nazi to put in charge of, the only people we could find to -- you know, we was supposed to set up governments at various places.

Q: Right.

A: And the only people we could find were people that had been in concentration camps, and they were often not really ready to run a city, or something like that, so it was difficult.

Q: Where were you based for that year after the war?

A: Various places in Germany. You can see on this line.

Q: So this route that is described on this map of --

A: That's the map that I went through --

Q: Can I read some of the names?

A: Sure.

Q: All right. So this is the route of the 79th Infantry Division, and it looks like that it went from France, down to France to Loutenburg (ph), Luxembourg, Strasbourg.

A: Well, this was the Battle of the Bulge up here.

Q: Uh-huh, in Belgium?

A: In Belgium was the Battle of the Bulge. We were called up there because there were some American troops that were surrounded at the time.

Q: Oh, yes. And there, and you get into Germany through ?Kothen?, through Essen, Recklinhausen --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- Mannheim, Winterberg, Alsfeld, Eisenach, which was already East Germany after the war, and then through --

A: To the Czech border, yes.

Q: -- to the Czech border, Felesenburg, which is already in Czechoslovakia?

A: Yeah.

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Q: So when you set up the military government, the 79th Infantry Division, you wanted to set up -- where were you based for that year? Were you in Czechoslovakia?

A: We moved around. This was --

Q: This was the route?

A: This was after the war.

Q: Uh-huh, that was after the war.

A: And we moved around from place to place, and most of the time we went back here and set up military governments in this area.

Q: Okay. So that what were talking about is Recklinghausen, Mannheim, Winterberg --

A: Right.

Q: That's where the military governments were set up. That's after the war. And then the 79th went from those places to Alsfeld, Eisenach, Meiningen, Eisfeld, ?Sonnebauch?, ?Holf?, Ash, and then Frankenberg. And it was in this part of Germany that you did -- conducted those interrogations, is that correct?

A: Well, the interrogation was conducted all the way along anytime there was a, the division took a prisoner, we would interrogate them.

Q: Okay. So that's through France, through Northern France, Belguim, down towards Strasbourg, back up to Battle of the Bulge?

A: Right, and then into Germany.

Q: And the Battle of the Bulge, was that where you were wounded?

A: No, actually, it was earlier. It was in July somewhere. I had a letter in here. What did I do with it?

Q: There's some letters in here, yes.

A: That said where I was wounded. Maybe not. There it is.

Q: Yeah. I certify that I was present when Tech IV, Eric H. Bondy, was wounded in action on July 11th, 1944, in Normandy. In Normandy. So it was very soon after landing. That he was treated in an American evacuation hospital, and the medical doctor in charge authorized the Purple Heart was to be issued to this solider. And it's signed by Richard H --

A: Pepi (ph).

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Q: Pepi. So this was very quickly. Do you remember anything from that incident?

A: I remember that I went to the, to some kind of Army hospital, and they sewed it up and put a bandage on it and told me to go back.

{Laughter}

Q: You mentioned that you had come into contact with concentration camp survivors. Do you remember the first time you saw any concentration camp survivors after liberation?

A: It was at Dachau after the war.

Q: How much after the war?

A: Oh, probably two weeks, three weeks after the Armistice.

Q: Okay. So that would have been end of May. That would have been end of May '45?

A: Right.

Q: Do you have memories of that? Do you have --

A: Of course, yes.

Q: What can you tell us about it.

A: As I said, it looked just like the photographs you have seen, a lot of dead people around, piles of clothing.

Q: How did you get into Dachau?

A: Huh?

Q: How did you -- tell us how you got there, what took to you to Dachau? Why were you sent there?

A: My division was stationed near Dachau, and they needed somebody to help interrogate the guards.

Q: Okay.

A: So I and another interrogator was sent over there to interrogate the guards and make some recommendation what to do with them.

Q: And there was still survivors of the camp in the camp?

A: There was some still there, yes.

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Q: Did you speak with them?

A: Yes. But --

Q: Did they say anything about those guards?

A: About what?

Q: About the guards you were going to interrogate?

A: Yeah, I asked them about the guards, and they said some were good; some were bad, so -- but they were in pretty bad shape. I mean, by the end of the war the Germans were running out of food, and of course they didn't give any food to the camps, so that many of them were really very badly starved.

Q: Right.

A: So that -- and then I can remember that I went around and told all the soldiers that were in the camp don't give them too much food; it will kill them. It will kill them. Don't give them. They used to hand them chocolate, which of course was terrible for them, and --

Q: Yeah.

A: And I remember that pretty vividly, trying to tell them. Most Americans soldiers were very generous that way and wanted to feed them and give them whatever they had. But it was just very bad for them since they had been starving and --

Q: How long did you stay in Dachau?

A: Six days, I think.

Q: And do you remember approximately how many guards you interrogated. I know it's a tough question.

A: Oh, I'm not sure. Maybe 20, 25, 30 of them.

Q: These people that you mentioned before --

A: Well, they were usually SS guards at the -- there were some -- I guess by the end of the war they had some guards from Latvia and various other occupied countries who swore up and down that they weren't SS, of course, but they were Latvian SS or Bastognian SS, but they were --

Q: That's interesting?

A: Huh?

Q: That's interesting. Was their demeanor any different than the German guards?

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A: Oh, yes. Nix SS Latvian.

Q: And had any of the prisoners identified them --

A: Yes.

Q: -- as being particularly cruel or particularly good or --

A: Not particularly good. Nobody was ever particularly good. They did point out some who were particularly cruel, but a lot of them were just guards.

Q: Oh, I had another question, and I just lost it. When you -- going back to the process of interrogation. After you completed an interrogation, what did you do? Did you have to write it up and pass it in?

A: We wrote it up and passed it to the, either the regimental or division commander, depending on who we were working for at the time.

Q: And the questions I would assume must have changed by the time you got to those camps?

A: Oh, during the war the questions were all tactical. After the war, we were looking for war crimes and, of course, we had arrested, oh, a lot of sort of Nazis with a rank around Mayia (ph). And then General Patton decided that the Nazis were just like Republicans and Democrats, and we should let them all go.

Q: Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. And did that happen?

A: Yes.

Q: That must have been galling.

A: Huh?

Q: That must have been galling.

A: Yes, it was. And I will admit that most of the people I was with cheered when they heard that Patton was killed.

Q: What else could you tell us about that experience of having interrogated so many people?

A: You know, it's like any other job, after a while --

Q: It becomes routine.

A: -- it becomes routine. And paid special attention to people who might have been war criminals, but the general run-of-the-mill solider, it got to be routine, and you pretty much asked the same thing over and over again.

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Q: Did you catch any people who were, you know, high-ranking who were war criminals?

A: Occasionally, there were some high ranking SS people who were trying to hide, but usually when that happened we would turn them over to higher authorities.

Q: The Ritchie Boys, how many -- when you were with the 79th Division, were they scattered all over amongst various divisions?

A: The Ritchie Boys were divided into teams -- one lieutenant, one sergeant, and one corporal.

Q: And you were part of such a team?

A: And I was the corporal on one of the teams. And each division would be getting one of these teams.

Q: What was your -- what was your interaction with one another? Were you all -- did you have --

A: We were always together for a whole year, so two years. Slept in the same place, and probably got on each others nerves, so --

Q: Were they also, your team members were they also from Germany? Did they have a similar background?

A: The lieutenant was from Milwaukee. At the time the Army did not want German refugees or recent refugees from Germany being officers in the Army, so that the lieutenants in the office were usually German speaking or poorly German speaking from places like Milwaukee and the other German --

Q: Midwest?

A: -- or New York, 86th Street, wherever that is.

Q: Yes.

A: But the enlisted men were usually the refugees. But they were all -- many of the refugees would come from Germany were older than I was. They were 36, 35. I remember that the person I was with, the other sergeant was about 35 at the time.

Q: Oh, yeah, I forgot for a minute as you were talking and as we were going through the military process, you were basically a kid?

A: Huh?

Q: You're basically a kid still.

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A: Yes. I was—I got in the Army when I was 18, and I guess I got out when I was 22.

Q: When you leave Germany -- by the one way, one last question on this. Do you remember the name of your teammates, you know, the corporal and the lieutenant?

A: I knew it about a month ago and then I've forgotten. I was at a Ritchie Boy reunion, and I guess both of those guys were dead because nobody knew anything about them, but I can't remember it now.

Q: Were you part of the film that was made about Ritchie Boys a while ago?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No? Were you contacted about it?

A: No, I saw the movie.

Q: You saw the movie?

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh, my goodness, and nobody had known to contact you?

A: Yes, I actually saw the movie at a Ritchie reunion.

Q: Let me go then to the end of the war. You -- you leave in 1946?

A: 1945, yeah.

Q: Were you glad to get out of Germany?

A: Yes. I was glad to get out of the Army. In fact, I made the mistake of throwing everything away.

Q: In general had it been, aside from the war interrogation --

A: Well, I didn't like and don't like the Army system of taking orders from -- you know, you take an order from the next higher up, and very often the people who gave the orders didn't know as much as the people who took them.

Q: {Laughter} That's a common frustration.

A: Yes.

Q: When you came back to the states, where did you go?

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A: By that time my parents had a school in Manchester, Vermont. I very quickly returned to college and went to Swarthmore and spent the next three and a half years there.

Q: Did you tell them about what some of your experiences were?

A: I probably didn't talk about the war for 30 years.

Q: I wanted to ask you about that. Because in the questionnaire that was sent back it was indicated that you had never been interviewed at all?

A: No.

Q: So that to me tells of a certain reticence.

A: Well, I certainly didn't volunteer to be interviewed, and it was just something so different from what anybody else had experienced, except an veteran, that I just didn't want to talk about it, and then maybe after 30 years I started talking about it.

Q: To whom?

A: I guess my wife and my parents.

Q: Is she -- does she also -- does she have a similar history to your own?

A: No. I was married -- I'm married twice.

Q: Okay.

A: My first wife was a student at Swarthmore, and her father was the head of the Harvard medical school, and she died of cirrhosis of the liver --

Q: Oh, my.

A: -- after we were divorced. And I've been married to my current wife for 35, maybe 38 years now. She was a teacher at Windsor.

Q: And your son is -- how many children do you have?

A: Two sons.

Q: Two sons.

A: One is the head of a school in Pennsylvania, and the other one is a construction type. And grandchildren.

Q: And you have grandchildren. How many?

A: Four.

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Q: Girls, boys?

A: Two are adult, and they're 19 and 20 from my oldest son. And my youngest son has a -- the two older ones are girls, and the two younger ones are boys, 3 and 8.

Q: Did any of the younger generations then come to you and say tell us about what happened?

A: My youngest son got interested in what I did during the war, maybe ten years ago. But you can't blame them. I never talked about it, and --

Q: What was your own profession? After you finished your masters at Swarthmore, what was your career after that? What did you do?

A: I was the headmaster of a co-educational boarding school for 35 years, called the Windsor Mountain School.

Q: So the same school your parents had founded?

A: The school was founded by my parents, yes. And then after I came to Washington I was the head of a number of small schools. Then I retired when I was 78, or something like that.

Q: Is there -- have you been back to Germany?

A: Once. I had -- didn't want to go back to Germany and always avoided going back to Germany. They had a ceremony to honor my parents, and I felt I should go to that, so I was back in Germany once.

Q: At the school?

A: No, it was in -- yeah, it was at the school too, but the ceremony was, I think, in Hamburg.

Q: Is there anything that I did not ask about that you think was important to note?

A: We talked so much I can't remember what I said.

Q: {Laughter}

Q: Well, you know, one interview can never capture everything, and I still have a lot of questions about, about the whole experience, the details, the training at Camp Ritchie and, you know, those experiences, but at the same time I realize I'm asking these so many decades later, and it's hard to remember.

A: It's very hard to remember, and particularly the war. Sometimes I don't know whether I've seen it in the movies or whether I've really experienced it because it's so long ago.

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Q: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, that's one of the -- that's one of the challenges that we face when we conduct these interviews --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- is that we know that so much time has passed, and so much more is known now than was known at the time. But this looks like a very interesting book, the one of the 79th Division. Have you had many reunions that you've gone to?

A: No. I just went to -- as I told you, I was not very pleased with the military so for about 15, 20 years I had no contact with any -- you're free to look at the book.

Q: Thank you. I will. I will. Why don't we turn this off. Hang on a second. I will say this concludes our interview with Mr. Eric Heinz Bondy on August 30th, 2012. Thank you very, very much.

A: You are very well behaved, guys.

Q: They were. They were very well behaved.

Conclusion of Interview

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