United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Mel London
April 22, 1996
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PREFACE

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MEL LONDON
April 22, 1996

Question: ... get you to state your name and where you were born _____.

Answer: Okay, Mel London, I was born in New York, I was born in the Bronx, as we used to say, in Charlotte Street, which is the famous area that Ronald Reagan stood in and said he was going to bring back and never did. I was born in 1923. At this point in 1996, I'll be 73 in August. My father, excuse me, my father and mother were both immigrants, my father was born in Russia, actually in Lithuania and came over to the United States when he was 11 years old. He supported the family, they lived on Rivington(ph) Street in the lower east side, he supported the family by being a professional boxer, something I never knew about until I was older and boxed at college and my father taught me everything I knew and he never bothered to tell me that he had been a professional boxer until I read about it in a column one time and found out that he was pretty good, which is why he always was better than I when he taught me to box. He then went into the dress business and for the rest of his life, until he was 83 and then retired and had to, because of health, he was in the dress business. My mother was born in England and came over as an infant. So they really came from a, an immigrant, both came from immigrant families. My father's background though, was something that we were never able to really trace back, we don't know why we have the name London, which of course was a taken name, in that coming from Lithuania there was another name, but his mother, being far ahead of her time, ran away from her husband and ran away with a lover. Now, for this happening at the beginning of the century, you realize is quite a rare occurrence and so the name was picked up somewhere and nobody ever knew where. I was brought up in the Bronx, I went to school in the Bronx, I went to city college and was interrupted by a war. I

enlisted in the army in September of 1942 and was discharged in the summer, I think it was in August of 1946. So I spent four years in the army.

Q: If you can, talk a little bit about before the war actually interrupted your studies, what were you hearing about what was going on in Europe and how was it a part of your consciousness?

A: Well I can actually remember the day that war was declared in September of 1939. We were still in the country, the family was just able, my father was just able to send the family away to the country so the kids shouldn't have to put up with the city and I can actually remember the, the war starting. At that time I was 16 years old, so that there was a consciousness of a teenager. As with most of the people here at that time, as I recall it, it was a distant thing, we knew the war was going on, I mean, you, we heard about the bombings, we knew the war was going on, we knew that the refugees were coming here or starting to come here, but very frankly knew very little about the nuances of it, we knew very little about the ships that were turned away, the one that went to Havana and was turned away. This came later. If I speak of it now, it's because of something that I'd read about, but at the time it was a war that was in Europe, you know, the war's in Europe again and I guess, particularly at 16 and being involved in track and girls and things like that, I really thought very little about the war. We followed it, you couldn't help but follow it, it was in the headlines all the time. So we knew about the Magino(ph) line, we knew about the problems of the bombings of England and so on and until America entered the war, for us it was happening in another place. We were not, at the time, as knowledgeable as we are now about what was happening in the concentration camps and with the Jews. We knew of course, about Kristallnacht, we knew about Hitler. In fact I remember as a child, listening to Hitler, I remember that they broadcast here, in the United States, they broadcast some of the speeches and I remember, whether it was from Nuremberg or some other place, the absolute electricity of this man when he spoke and

I must say I hear the patterns with some of the people we have around the United States now, you can actually hear the patterns, you can hear if you've studied the patterns and the things they were said, without getting into the politics of the United States, you could begin to hear how he enthralled the people. Later on I was to see Nuremberg, later on I was to see the stadium, later on I was to see the films of all of these, these rallies, but we actually remember them and I can remember to this day, sitting in the little foyer that we had in an apartment in the Bronx and listening to this man.

Q: Any other memories about that, perhaps that your father might have had or your mother? Your father might have still had family in Russia or any concern there might have been in the family for Jews in general or specific people that you knew?

A: Well I think, without being religious Jews, we all, always did have and still do have a feeling of being Jewish. My father did not have family there. Yeah. So that we have always felt a very deep feeling of Judaism without being religious Jews. My father did speak of other pogroms. He was brought up in area where the Cossacks were very, very active and her remembers the raids in the little town of Puniaman(ph). I found out much later in life that I was one thirty-second Cossack, which was something that destroyed my brother when he heard it. We don't know where the great, great, great, great grandfather was the rapist or whatever it may have been, but we were one thirty-second Cossack. In terms of Europe, from 1933 say, until the war began and I was much more involved certainly, in listening, we really had very, as I recall, very little discussion about it. And that may have been very normal in the family, I just don't remember very much.

Q: You enlisted, why did you, what were your reasons? Do you remember speaking to your family about it?

A: Oh yeah. I, as a matter of fact I enlisted because, there was a war, they were beginning to draft people, my father had spent, I guess a year and a half or so in World War 1 as an infantryman. He

was wounded three times. The third time he was wounded they wanted to take his leg off because of gangrene. And that's an interesting story in that he then refused to sign the paper. And he wouldn't sign the paper and the gangrene receded. He said, "I came into this world with two legs, I'm going out with two legs." The gangrene receded. My father, from 1918, never went to a doctor, until he was 83 years old and hurt himself working in the dress business, a bolt of cloth had fallen on his wrist and I made him go to the doctor and the doctor said, "Well Mr. London, when was the last time you visited a doctor?" He said, "1918." And the doctor said, "Well, you're none the worse for it." My father said to me, "Don't ever get in the infantry. Do anything to get out of the infantry." And he had gone through three wounds and the trenches and of course, as every soldier he only told funny stories about how his mother sent potato pancakes overseas, you know and they arrived like rocks, but he never told about the terror and the horror of it, but he did communicate to me that it was pretty awful. And so I enlisted in, I actually enlisted in the enlisted reserve in May of '43 and was in the signal corps, I enlisted in the signal corps. And that probably, that and also getting pneumonia when my unit went overseas to go to D-Day, saved my life, I was in the hospital with pneumonia, so. But that was the basic reason I enlisted was I knew I would be drafted, but I thought I might just as well enlist and get some kind of a background and that signal corps background in fact, was the thing that created a career for me later on. So I enlisted and I went to, into the army where several things happened. One, to make me understand more about anti-Semitism, because in the Bronx particularly and I left the Bronx at 17 and pretty much at 19 I enlisted. In the Bronx you got very little of it, the Bronx was very heavily Jewish. I was now coming into the United States army, a democracy of sorts, or fighting for a democracy, where I began to come into anti-Semitism in both it's subtle and it's overt forms. It was obvious if you were going to be in the army you were going to get it. I mean the anti-Semitic jokes that suddenly started to be told around me while

someone turned and says, "Well, I don't mean you, I don't consider you Jewish," when after all, I am Jewish, is one thing. The second thing was that I, after two years, went to OCS. I had gone all the way from...

Q: What's OCS?

A: Officer Candidate School. I had gone from private to PFC and then they busted me back to private because they didn't have enough room for a PFC you see and I decided I was going nowhere after two years. Luckily I was teaching in school, I was teaching at officer, at officer school as a private and a PFC, I was teaching colonels and generals and like an idiot I kept volunteering to go overseas with them. I wanted to go to New Guinea, I wanted to go to Europe and nobody would let me go, I was one of eight people who had a top secret clearance with the United States army, teaching this course, so nobody would let me go. I finally decided the only way to get out of this would be to go into Officer Candidate School. So I applied for Officer Candidate School and again , in speaking of the, the anti-Semitism in the army, I was in a company, I was first sergeant in a company of 250 officer candidates. There were 13 Jews and two blacks and I, as first sergeant, was allowed to pick my roommate. You see, the barracks were made up and if you've seen barracks, they were made up of 60 beds, double decker and one squad room. The squad room was where there were two beds and the first sergeant and one other non-commissioned officer would be in the squad room, so you had a private room. And so I had to become very friendly with a man from Washington D. C. named Bob MacNeil(ph), who happened to be one of the two blacks and having been brought up on the Bronx, I mean I was on a track team with all kinds of people, it made no difference to me and he was the only guy who seemed to understand inner city thinking and was getting the same kind of battering from the others that I was getting, so in front of a company of 250 men, the man was Lieutenant Coyne(ph), Lieutenant Coyne(ph) said, "Mr. London," I said, "Yes,

sir." He said, "As first sergeant you can choose anyone you like to spend the next three months in the squad room with you" and I said, "Mr. MacNeil(ph) sir," so in front of 250 men, I picked one of the two blacks, in 1943 or '44. This was pretty much unheard of. Two things happened, several things happened. Number one, the day before graduation, 12 of the 13 Jews were washed out of school, I always say, quite by accident, 12 of the 13 Jews were washed out and one of the two blacks. The only two people left of that entire group starting, were Bob MacNeil(ph) and me. At the dance, at the graduation dance, Cheryl, who is my wife of 50 years now, as you know and I knew then, I met her when she was 17 and was still in college, came to Fort Monmouth(ph) to attend the dance and Bob had a friend, a woman named Lua(ph), attend the dance and they had dance cards in those days, you actually had a dance card so that you signed up for the dance and I signed up for a dance with Lua(ph) and she was black also and I, I went on the dance floor with her when our turn came and that was fine and then came the time for Bob to dance with Cheryl and as she got on the floor with him, the floor emptied and all the colonels sitting up on the balcony looked like they were getting nauseous and they were leaning over and Bob said, "Do you want to stop dancing?" You got to remember, this is in the 40's and she said, "No." And they danced. Nothing ever happened, I was then assigned and then came an interesting thing. For two years in the army, I was assigned to black troops. I went down to the south and I trained with black troops, I went overseas with 4000 black troops. I went to a black replacement depot. I was then shipped to a replacement company, picking up wire behind Mauclauck's(ph) third army, the 258 signal light construction company, which is a black company. I said to a black friend of mine, "I have a feeling that after that incident at, in OCS, they put N on my service record for Negro." She said, "Maybe they put nigger lover on your service record, NL." And that was, but it turned out to be one of the great, great army experiences. I mean, if you had to have a great army experience, this was it. So

all of this comes as a background of meeting middle America in all of this and being much more aware of how our own people felt about Jews, about blacks. I mean, being so isolated in the Bronx, I guess I, it was another opening experience. Now, then when I went to Europe and I was there about the time of Nuremberg, I did not see combat by the way, I was very lucky on that, for four years in the army, never to have seen combat was very lucky and again I thank my father for having been in the signal corps and taking, oh there was one funny thing by the way, which may or may not have anything to do with this but when I graduated from Officer Candidate School as a second lieutenant, I was sent back to the school again as a student, where I had written the examinations and I had taught for several years, which is a typical army thing. I was now a lieutenant taking a course with examinations I had written. I did very well. In fact on one I think I got one question wrong once because I, I sloughed. When I went to Europe with the occupation forces then, I went through _____ Belgium and then on 40 and eight trains out to, to Graffenau(ph) in Bavaria, with the 258 signal light construction company. I began to become much more aware of several things, number one, of course by that time I was aware of what the Germans had been doing, I did see Dachau after the fact, I knew all of this existed. I never met a Nazi except once, though I was firmly convinced that everybody had been. Nobody admitted it, which I think will come to pass when we talk about Albert Speer. The one person who admitted that he had been a Nazi and a member of the Nazi party I hired as my driver in Berlin. He was the only honest man I could find and therein hangs a tale when you talk about what happened at Nuremberg, what happened to the people who claimed they never knew what had happened. I went back to the United States in 1946 for what we laughingly call rest and recuperation because I got married and Cheryl and I spent 60 days here on honeymoon, went to Washington to try to get her over and then she came over as the first of what she laughingly calls the dependents. She then spent two years on

Europe with me in Salzburg, where I was station manager of a radio station, KOFA on the American Forces Network and then went to Berlin with her as Program Manager of American Forces Network, Berlin. And we spent the two years, we were there during the airlift and the Russian blockade. Things, as always happened, it's, when you're in a situation, it seems to be a lot less important or a lot less threatening than it is to people who are reading about it in the Washington Post or the New York Times. And though we were blockaded and we did have an airlift when the Russians turned the power off at 11 o'clock at night, we lit candles, it was that simple. We flew out in 1948 on C47 planes, with our German Shepherd on our laps, you see and then came back to the States. So this was the story, essentially condensed, about these years. Do you have any other questions on this?

Q: Mm-hm, if you want to talk a little bit about becoming aware of Nuremberg, you were in Europe, particularly what did people say about it, what were your thoughts about it and anything about Albert Speer because after all, you eventually did interview him and we'll get to that, but in terms of having a background.

A: Very good question because a lot of what my feeling were with Albert Speer later on and my experience with him had to do with the things that had happened then. I was aware of Nuremberg, I knew what was going on at Nuremberg, I followed it very, very closely. So a lot of what I, I felt at that time, or a lot of my experience at that time had a lot to do in turn with my feelings about Speer. Now I was not day to day involved in what was going on at Nuremberg. I knew what was going on at Nuremberg, I passed through Nuremberg at the time of the trials, I knew the trials were going on, I saw the tanks outside, I knew what was going on at Nuremberg, however, at that time an interesting thing happened, I was still in the army and I was in Salzburg and Cheryl was due to come over and we were setting up, we had a _____, a kind of a castle with a moat type

of thing, where we had eight Americans and 12 German servants, Austrians, I thought it would always, Cheryl said she thought it would always be this way, you see and, and one of my best friends was a man named Dixie Howell. Dixie Howell was a member, is a major, is a member of the engineers and I guess I was angry at what had happened, I realized that if Germany had won the war I would be dead, I ___. And so one day, since he was the engineer, he used to build the scaffolds to hang the people who were found guilty of massacring unarmed American soldiers. SS men, people like that and I used to spend the morning watching the hangings. That is one of the most interesting things in terms of what it's done to me today, am I for the death penalty or against the death penalty, how could I stand there in the morning, at six o'clock in the morning on the dock and watch people hanged, you see, and not care? The eye for an eye, I don't know. But that had a lot to do later on, with when I was asked to do the Albert Speer interviews, because if I could spend those mornings, I obviously had a deep seated anger and hostility and a feeling of vengeance, to be able to stand and watch people hanged, whom I didn't even know, I mean these are not even like the great murders that we read about in the United States today, to watch people hanged and to have no feelings while some of the soldiers who were there as honor guards, would faint. And my feelings then, if I could go back to that, in fact I did some drawings and sent them to Cheryl, I went there and I would draw the hangings. Sure, I was 21 or 22 years old, it's not an excuse, it's just that that's what it was, I've thought about that often and as recently as the last couple of weeks in talking about death penalty and eye for an eye and so on and this came back to me and said, but if I stood there and I watched this, how do I feel now? So Nuremberg was going on through this time and I know what the, I of course knew even then what the results were, I knew when they were hanged, I knew about Göring taking the pills and committing suicide. I knew all about that then, but it was kind of apart from other things, this was we had won the war, we had the trial, we would hope it would never

happen again and look what's happened. And I, Albert Speer I didn't even know. I knew Göring, I knew Goebbels, I knew Himmler, I knew all of the names I should have known. Speer was a non-entity to me, if you had mentioned Albert Speer to me at that time, I probably would have said, "Yeah, isn't he, isn't he the minister of armaments, maybe." And I say that in 20/20 hindsight, I don't know. At 21 or 22 years of age, it's hard for me to tell you now.

Q: If you can go back to the hangings a little bit, set that scene, what about the first time that you went and how often did you go and how many people were hung at a time and how long would you stay?

A: I only went to three, maybe four and then, as with everything else, I mean it's, it isn't a, terrible to say, a novelty, but essentially it's, you know, remembering the time, remembering what we had just been through, it was a part of, a part, death was a part of life and remembering or, I remember there was another thing and you'll be talking to people who were dealing with refugees, Europe was in turmoil, this was not the way it is now, you did not get on trains, the trains had no windows, people were trying to find other people. If you traveled from one place to another, people were crowding onto planes, I saw, I saw, this is something that just came back to me, I remember GI MP's shooting into the air to keep people from getting onto the GI car because the other cars were so crowded where people were going from Frankfurt to Berlin, from Berlin to Nuremberg to find, to Munich to find their relatives. Remember, everybody was a displaced person, including the Germans. And so you went from, from place to place as an army person and you had your own cars, all of with the windows bombed out. My first time to Vienna I sat, in the middle of the winter, with windows, with four blankets around me. I mean this was the way people traveled. When you look in context of what Europe was at that time, where when the train stopped and people got off and relieved themselves at the side of the tracks and got back on the train, these were pretty terrible times, so a

hanging was part of life in this whole thing. Now, how often did I go, I can remember three, there may have been a fourth and I stopped. I didn't get a kick out of it, I went because it was something to go to. There was a courtyard. It was a very, very dimly lit courtyard. There was a scaffold in the middle and there was always, interestingly enough, whether I call it an honor guard, but a guard of GI's who were standing at the side, as I recall there may have been 10 or 12 in two rows and they were the witnesses to it and the, the sentence was read out in both German and English, it must have been in English too, because I remember what they were and there would be, a typical one would be somebody who had taken two GI's prisoners and had, had killed them, had shot them and was found guilty by a court and was hanged. Then the hoods were put over their heads, there were usually two at a time, both trap doors were sprung at the same time, there's a priest and then I guess the thing I remember always is the bodies being put in the coffin and one person being too log for the coffin and I would leave. It took half an hour. And then probably went to breakfast. I mean this is the way it was, you see. So in a sense this was as cold blooded as anything else that's ever been done, but it was again taken as part of what the daily life was at that time, you had trials, there were trials all over Germany. In Bavaria I went to trials with people who had done, I can barely remember, I remember doing drawings of a priest who was brought up on trial and the people pleading for him and I used to send these drawing back to Cheryl, I still have the drawings. You went because this was how Europe was coming out from the war.

Q: And your thinking about it in terms of not being disturbed by it was that these people committed crimes and they had to pay for it?

A: Yes and at the same time that you knew that a lot of Americans had committed crimes. I mean they were not the only ones who shot prisoners and I guess the people who say we, you won therefore, do have a point. At the same time we won therefore, thank God, you see. But I guess,

you know, I guess that it all came back to me later on, when we started to discuss Nuremberg and when we started to talk about my going to interview Albert Speer.

Q: Let's talk about that. In the interim, you became a film maker. I don't know if you want to sort of just quickly bring us up to that and then to the point where you got an assignment to interview Albert Speer.

A: I became, actually I became very quickly a radio announcer, a sportscaster, learned enough about sports and met enough athletes to hate sports and went into disc jockey and then into television and then by accident in 1956, standing on the corner of 69th Street and Madison Avenue, I met my company commander from World War 2 and he said to me, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm a television director." And he said, "Why are you in television, why don't you do film?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." And he says, "I own a film company." Interestingly enough, during the war we hated one another, now we're in civilian clothes and he offered me a job in his film company, that's how I became a film maker. I teach at NYU and I have told my students that's how you become a film maker. Can you imagine if I'd been on 70th Street and Madison Avenue, or 68th Street and Madison Avenue, I would not be in film. I became a documentary film maker. I became interested in the documentary, never interested in the feature, mostly because of meeting I guess people you'd call real people. If you do a film on hospitals, you're going to actually be in hospitals, you're not going to build sets. I really, though I did do a lot of dramatic things on television, like play of the week, I really, never really enjoyed working with actors, I always enjoyed working with real people and finding out about them and I have a curiosity and so I became a documentary film maker and in 1963 was nominated for an Academy Award for a film on Parkinsonism and aging and then aging has been a subject of mine for a long time, I've done consultations on it, I've done seminars and I've been consultant. But basically I've, I've worked in 60 countries, my wife has been

along on almost all of them as a part of the company. I have a curiosity, I do have a curiosity and in 19, I guess in the mid-70's, I don't remember when Speer's book came out but it was in the 70's, Inside the Third Reich came out and I was called by McMillan, a woman at McMillan by the name of Alma Trynor(ph), who also, incidentally was Jewish, which has something to do with it and the book was coming out and she said, "Let's have lunch" and we had Chinese lunch and she said we'd like you to go overseas and interview Albert Speer. By this time I knew a lot more about Albert Speer, I mean, not a lot, but a lot more. By this time I was now some years away from the whole thing and I had not read the book, she let me read the, I saw it in manuscript, I did not see it in the final book til later, saw it in manuscript and they had wanted to do a series of films to put Albert Speer on record about a great many of the things that he had written about in the book. I did not know at that time that there had been a lot of changes made from the German edition, I found this out much later. And when she asked if I would do it, one would think I would have jumped on it, actually I turned it down. I turned it down and I said, "I couldn't do it, I can't go back to Germany, I have great problems when I do go back on business." And I had been back several times on travel films and on documentaries. "I really would prefer not to go to interview Albert Speer." And she said, "Well when in your life would you have a chance to meet and interview Hitler's number two man?" And I said, "Well I guess I never would." And now the curiosity begins to take over, right, you're a film maker, a documentary film maker and you're going to find out about this and then it occurred to me that there's a very weird, almost surreal feeling about going to interview a man who would have had you killed or have worked you to death if he had won or if I had been in Europe. And I couldn't resist it. I said, "Yes, I will go." And at that point I read the book again, I did all my research and reading about Nuremberg again, I found that I was going to go and I would have to really set my mind to the right attitude. I could not go there with the attitude that I wished he'd had

hung, which I had, but if I was going to get anything from him, we would now have to have a kind of a hands off, polite attitude. I had no idea what he would be like and so I went back to Heidelberg(ph) with Alma and we spent 10 days with Albert Speer.

Q: Talk a little bit more about how you felt when the woman from the publishing house said, "I'd like you to go" and you said, "No." I mean, why the automatic no? What was going through your head?

A: Well I probably, I probably laughed when I said no, I mean it was a very strange kind of a request. I seldom on a job have said no. I have said no on films where my ethics were involved. Without saying what side I'm on, but on some of the great issues of the world, such as abortion, the Vietnam War and so on, I had refused films. I refused this on an emotional basis, that I really, number one, did not want to promote his book. Number two, there's the gut feeling that I'm uncomfortable in Germany and that's basically it, you know. I guess though, that the, the whole idea of, as she said, meeting someone who was Hitler's number two man, overwhelmed everything else and I decided I would go. But basically I think I've always had a feeling that if I sold one more copy of that book, I'm sorry I did. On the other hand, I'm all for people writing what they feel and, you know, and we have that now even with the David Irving book, though Saint Martens(ph) should probably never have taken it in the first place, the, the title, the David Irving book is on Goebbels the one on Goebbels, which is a Holocaust revisionist, he's the great Holocaust revisionist. I have no problem with him writing, I can't stand the man, but you see what I'm talking about, no problem with the book coming out, but why am I publicizing the book? At the same time, perhaps I could get some of the answers to which I had always felt I would like some answers and understanding also this was going to be a bright man, this was going to be a man who had really thought about

what he was going to say and that can come later, we can talk about that, because I have many feelings about that. So I went.

Q: How did you prepare yourself emotionally to meet him in a somewhat open way? And was that your goal or did you say to yourself, well I'm going to have opinions about this man and I just, I'm not going to get rid of them, I'm just going to put them to the side. How did you prepare yourself to do that?

A: That, it's again, talking to yourself and saying you know, what is your attitude going to be and I had done enough interviews to say, okay, for the moment, though I have an emotional context in this one, I am just not going to ever show hostility and by the way, there is later, we'll talk about his reaction to me and my reaction to him, after ten days, because he was very perceptive about how I felt and I was very perceptive about what he was doing. So it was a hands off thing, I mean it was no Albert-buddy, Mel-buddy thing, you have to understand that and that too is a part of our relationship that we can talk about. I arrived in Heidelberg(ph) and my client Alma arrived there, I think that day later or the next day, I don't recall, but the first thing we were to do was to meet Albert Speer at the hotel and we were to go to dinner. And I was excited, in a strange way, I mean after all, it's if you'd said you're going to meet Adolf Hitler I would be excited in a strange way. This was not just meeting somebody who was the president of a corporation. I came down from the, from my room, Alma was still up in her room. I came down from my room and I was sitting in the lobby when he came in with his wife Margaretta and I'll never forget the reaction of the staff. They absolutely were enchanted with this man. This is after the war, this is after Nuremberg, this is after he got out of Spandau and the greeting of the manager could not have been more effusive. I was introduced to him, we were, shook hands, I met his wife, we shook hands. Alma came down and we went to dinner. We went to dinner at a restaurant of his choosing, which again set the

pattern for all the time we were in Heidelberg(ph). Everybody in the restaurant was at least 50 or 60 years old. The owners, as I recall were at least 60 years old and therefore were of his generation. He had chosen a restaurant where the greeting would be absolutely the top greeting that he could get, it was the great customer coming in of any restaurant, here is one. I, that was the first startling thing, was that these people still admired and probably adored this man and that was a little shaky, contrasted with the fact that from that point on, everywhere else we went in Heidelberg(ph), whether it was to have a Coca-Cola in a small bar or in the case of my client Alma, having her hair done one day, every time we walked into a place, the young people walked out. The word got around town and this is ironic, the word got around town that friends of Albert Speer were there. This Jewish friend from the Bronx was therefore ignored by most of the people who were in their 20's and 30's. Alma's hairdresser walked right out on her. She had made an appointment, came in, they said, "That's Albert Speer's friend" and they walked out. And so there was this incredible separation of the, so there was this incredible separation of generations and very obvious one. Now I was there for 10 days and there were several times that we had dinner with him. Most of the time we did have dinner at his home, which was also a strange experience. I met some of his children. He seemed quite distant from the children too. I have a feeling from the short conversations, their politics were quite different from his. I have a feeling also, after 20 years in Spandau, he had a great, great distance from the children, I think there was an emotional distance. That was a feeling, I mean, you never know. His wife Margaretta was the classic, well -meaning, polite German frau. She never was close to any of our crew. She never was close to us, she did what she had to do and he in turn was always polite, always wore a suit or a jacket, which meant I always wore a suit. These days perhaps we'd be in blue jeans, but we always wore a suit and we spent the 10 days,

almost entirely, talking and filming and discussing the things we discussed on film. Hitler, Hitler as an artist and we did a film also later on, which I'll talk about, on architecture in a totalitarian regime.

Q: And who wrote down the questions and structured the interview? Were you involved in that, was that your client, did you have a sense that there were any subjects that were skirted?

A: I set up the questions basically, with my client, but basically they were, they were based on the book and also on questions that I had had all these years. I mean now, finally, I have a chance to, I have a chance to speak to Hitler's number two man and I'm going to ask him questions, which becomes a difficult thing, because he had spent his 20 years, let's go back to Nuremberg, the man at Nuremberg and if I may, the question I had, if I go back, if I can just digress for a minute is why was Göring sentenced to death, okay? Well, he was a very well known man and VonShurak(ph) and all the people there, why were they sentenced to death and why did two or three of them get away with 20 years on Spandau? My feeling then, as my feeling now, even after meeting him, is that he should have been hanged too. But a very interesting thing came up, I asked him a question that I think was the key and Gidda Serany(ph) in her book *Albert Speer; His Battle with Truth,* brings it up, I think it's on page 167 and I would like to read to it to a moment. "The New York Times, when he died, printed an obituary and an editorial, both of which said Albert Speer was the only man in Nuremberg to say he was guilty. Sitting on a lawn in Heidelberg(ph) I asked them the question which started, you were the only man at Nuremberg to say you were guilty. He stopped me at that point and said, I didn't say I was guilty, I said I was responsible." And for all the years I have been going over the nuances between guilt and responsibility and obviously there is a big difference and in Gidda Serany's(ph) book, she tries to, in a sense, come up with the answer as to why Speer did not get sentenced to death. In Nuremberg the most amazing thing happened and it was a documentary the other night that covered it. Every single one talked about how he did not

know this had happened. Every single one said, well, no, yes he was doing his job, but all this was happening beside him. Speer was the only man who admitted he knew something about it. "Speer was not," she says, "Speer was not, as is sometimes claimed, the only one of the accused at Nuremberg to feel and admit to guilt," by the way, she uses the word guilt and I questioned her on that, "but his admission, even though much too generalized, was remarkable, because he was the only one, who by making it, risked fatally influencing the court's sentence, which for the others who accepted guilt, Hans Frank, Alfred Rosenberg, Olendoff(ph) was inevitable." He was the only one who said he knew any of this was going on. He knew that slave labor was being used and in a sense, he was the only one then who stood apart from all of the others, because if you hear their excuses, I mean this is absolute insanity that these people claimed that nothing went on, when a man who was in charge of the concentration camps didn't know what was going on in the concentration camps, so that, whatever the reasons, he was always quick to say that he had not admitted guilt, but responsibility and I wrote a letter to the New York Times as you know, which covered that and it's always been a very key point in my feelings about Albert Speer.

Q: How did you come to understand how he differentiated between the two? Why did he stop you when you asked that question, say, "No, I didn't say guilt." I mean, what was the difference to him?

A: The difference to him was that if he had said he was guilty, even at that point, even after the fact, then he was as guilty of doing it, or having a guilt for having done it as all of the others. By saying responsible, he was one of the people who had it happen. And I think there's just that thin level. In other words, I see it as very much the same, if you want to know the truth, but it was this very thin level that I think he felt, in his own mind. The problems that I had with Albert Speer and I must give Gidda Serany(ph) for her book is that she spent four years with him, I spent 10 days. When I left, and we'll go back to the other things later, but when I left, he asked my client how she thought

we had done and she said, "Well, Mel's interviewed before and I think we got everything and as you know, we were out to do a series of short films which would be put in the Huntington-Hartford museum." And he said, "It's a funny thing about Mel," he said, "he hides everything he feels behind a sense of humor." And I said, "Would you like to feel my feeling about Albert Speer?" She said, "Yes." I said, "He hides everything he feels behind 20 years in Spandau." This man had had 20 years to come up with all the answers. You talked about Hitler and the Jews, Hitler hated the Jews, you talked about anything about slave labor, he had all of the answers. He had written his book, I saw the original manuscript, which was written on tiny scraps of paper about three inches wide and jagged edges. Wherever he could get paper he wrote this entire book. I know also that the book was changed substantially when it came from German to English. He had the 20 years, he knew he would be talked to after he got out and he was difficult. I did, if I, was I able to break him down at one point? Very interesting time, only once did I ever ...

End of Side 1, Tape 1

A: Yes, was there a time, is this running? Yeah, it's running. Was there a time that I felt I had gotten to him? I asked him what I thought was a very offhanded question, I said, "How often did your wife visit you in Spandau?" And he said, "Once a month." I said, "And how often did your children visit you in Spandau?" And he said, "Once every six months." And I said, "What did you talk about?" And that is the only time I saw emotion on that man, he started to tear, I could actually see an emotional reaction and he said, "What do you talk about with someone you love," and it may be on the tapes that I, "what do you talk about with someone you love when you see them only once a month for a few hours or once in six months, once a year or six months for a few hours?" Other than that the man had, he was gracious, he answered all the questions, his English as you know, was excellent and then we had some interesting experiences. We went through the questions and later

we cut the little _____, we had some interesting experiences, one afternoon he said, "I would like to show you some of my home movies" and I said, "Oh, how marvelous Herr Speer, let's go in and look at some home movies." And so we went into his living room, it was a rather nice house by the way, the house was on a hill in Heidelberg(ph), it was a family home and they'd had for I guess many years. The only problem with it was when there was a storm over Frankfurt the airplanes used to come over and circle and you couldn't record. But aside from that we sat on the lawn with the birds chirping and we went inside and we went to look at the home movies. And he showed me the home movies of Albert Speer and Adolf Hitler inspecting the tiger tanks on the Russian front. And I was a little startled be this because I mean home movies are home movies but this is watching his trip with Hitler to the Russian front. Later he said, "Would you like to see some of Adolf Hitler's drawings?" And this was toward the end of the visit, we went to inside and again he took out all these drawings. Hitler was a terrible artist by the way, terrible. The drawings, and a fascinating thing happened, which kind of leaps forward, Alma decided that she would take the drawings back to the United States and put them up on the walls during the exhibition at the Huntington-Hartford Museum, which was then at 59th Street and Columbus Circle and that we would have a demonstration or an exhibition of Hitler's drawings. So she arrived at Kennedy airport, I had gone off without her and she arrived at Kennedy airport, she tells me and customs, she was carrying them under her arm and Customs said to her, "What do you got there?" She said, "Adolf Hitler's drawings." And they said, "Oh, we've had enough wiseguys like you," you know, and they passed her through. But again, the drawings were shown at Huntington-Hartford Museum. We also did a film which was not planned, that I wanted to do and I don't know where those films are, possibly McMillan(ph) has them, I don't know if McMillan(ph) still is the McMillan(ph) it was then, but somebody must have those films. But we did one film that for me was the most

fascinating. His interviews were fine, I mean, I got as much as I thought I could get, but there was one that we did where he was really in his element. I asked him, as Gidda Serany(ph) asked him, as many reporters asked him, how he could work with this monster, I mean how could you be a member of Hitler's group and work your way up and he came up with a very interesting answer and I guess in all fairness, you have to accept it. He said, "How would you feel if you were a 29 year old architect and the head of state had asked you to be his architect?" He said, "You're very proud of the head of state," he said, "remember, this is..." And this is all before the war really got under way, this was all in the early days and as a 29 year old, if you look at the people who follow the presidents, who follow the congresspeople, look at all your young people, some of them are really very arrogant. I've seen people come in to an airport and say, "Yeah I want a car because I'm with Jimmy Carter's entourage." And they're 22 years old going on eight, you know and you can understand at 29 this man was suddenly recognized by the head of state. So we went to the drawings that he had done and we did a film on architecture in a totalitarian society and I think the thing that amazed me is if I was startled by Hitler's drawings, which were so bad, I was even more startled by the scale of everything that goes on in a totalitarian society. Going back to the demonstrations at Nuremberg in the 30's, with the torchlights, and I did see that, that stadium, it's an incredible stadium. Going back to the stadium at Nuremberg, going back to everything they ever built, which was always larger than the person, everything that Speer designed, which was going to be in Berlin, right after Germany won the war was on a scale that belies imagination. For example, a dome which would be on the Unterdinlinden(ph) and would hold 100,000 people. Just a dome. And then the Unterdinlinden(ph) would now be made into a military avenue of about 48 lanes wide, with cannon on each side. Everything he showed me was totalitarian, was fascist. It's what Mussolini did, it's what Hitler would do and this man involved himself in things that were beyond

imagination in terms of scale. I mean a skyscraper's a skyscraper, when you talk about a dome, under which 100,000 people can stand comfortably, you're talking about a pretty big dome.

Q: What was he like when he showed you these drawings, did you sense pride or perhaps a bit of embarrassment, what was he like?

A: He would not have taken the drawings out if it were embarrassing. He took the drawings out with pride, he showed them with pride. He showed them matter-of-factly. Speer was a very matter-of-fact man with someone like me. I remember him smiling occasionally, certainly, I remember him being warm, but he showed pride in that. I mean, to show me Hitler's drawings, then he said Mel must have a curiosity to see Hitler's drawings, which I did. So I would say there was no embarrassment about anything. Which gets back to that whole thing of guilt and responsibility doesn't it? I didn't find any feeling that he was sorry for it. I certainly would love to have had him say he was sorry they lost the war, but you, you'd never get this from him. He was very withdrawn in that sense but very bright and all his answers were there. I have not heard the tapes in a lot of years, you have, recently, I sent them down without hearing them and at some point I think I'd like to hear them again. And I'm sorry two tapes are missing because I don't know which two tapes are missing. If I find them, they'll go down. But the 10 days went very comfortably, shall I say? I remember another thing, I am a hugger, I mean you know, I am a toucher, I'm a hugger. Well, I didn't hug him, but when we left, Margaretta was saying goodbye to the crew and she had really been a very nice woman, I mean you know, she wasn't, like my mother or my grandmother, she was a nice woman. She took care of the crew, she fed us, she was at the table with us. She said very little. And so, impulsively I went to hug her and that's when I realized that this was really a job, I was hugging a rod of steel. This was no woman who was going to hug me back. So whatever her feelings were about this Jewish producer, I don't know, but that was, that, I always remember, I can

remember it vividly, I can remember where we were because it was kind of a slap in my face that, but I am impulsive that way and I hug people, I hug men I love, I hug women, I hug. Because I like to touch. But not there. He and I shook hands.

Q: What about the mood and also the eye contact, what was that like for you and how did you feel after a day, five, six hours of filming, how did you feel afterwards?

A: That's a wonderful question because I think what I did is I think that after the day, I blanked out. I did not do, I could not have spoken to you after the interviews as I'm speaking to you now, 20 some odd years later. It was a job. I hate to say it that way because you know, it was my job, I did it, people use that as an excuse, but it was a job and if I was going to do the job properly, I had to do it as a professional. Otherwise I should not have taken the job. And so how did I feel through the day? I was interested, I was interested in what he had to say, the relationship was comfortable at that time. At the end of the day I have, we went around Heidelberg(ph), we went to dinners, we really never discussed it or if we discussed it I can't remember having discussed it in any depth now. But all of the, the days were very comfortable days, the weather turned out to be great, it was June as I recall, the weather turned out to be great. He was always very, very charming and I thought more about what questions I'd ask the next day but never did I ever feel like Gidda Serany(ph) did in four years in being able to break through some of this. The man could not be broken through. And whether he then eventually said or felt he was guilty as she says, he did not at that time. Did I feel when I left there that they should have hanged him? Yeah. I feel it to this day. I think he got away with murder. For whatever reasons, he got away with murder. He was using slave labor. His excuses for that of course, if you've heard the tapes are you know, this was a war effort, he had nothing to do with the day to day things in the factories, he had to provide people so they could

provide for the war effort. He was a loyal German, which he should have been. I guess probably even after this, I'll think of things that will come back now that I didn't think of 20 years ago.

Q: Did you have any sense of him having an inner struggle and perhaps say, being afraid of it almost and saying no, I still have to believe that what I did was okay, or did you have a sense of that going on inside of Albert Speer?

A: Yeah, I would never know what was going on inside of Albert Speer, he had learned to control that and whether he did or not, I know that in future interviews, like in this latest book, he had learned to back off where he didn't want to answer and even if you pursued it, he would go only so far. Did he have an inner turmoil? I don't know, I don't know. I don't know if the man felt that he was sorry he was ever convicted, he was sorry they had ever lost, I have no idea and I would never know this of Albert Speer. He handled himself very well in those interviews. He did what he was supposed to do, I did what I was supposed to do. If I had to do it all over again, I probably would come up with even more driving questions than I did then because I know a lot more now than I did then and it's very difficult to go into an interview like that as a documentary film maker, having studied everything you can about it and still think that you've covered everything, you can't cover everything. There are the old, I should have, I could have.

Q: Why do you think he did the interview, or why did he do, beyond perhaps the obvious reasons, I mean the man didn't have to do interviews, but apparently he did them somewhat frequently.

A: I think that they, I think a part of it, well first I think Albert Speer did his interviews partially for the reasons that you kind of touched on a moment ago of being able to justify Albert Speer and his background and what he did. Partially because I think he was convinced that if you're going to sell the book and, I mean this is a very pragmatic reason, that you're going to sell your book and you're going to convince people to go buy a book of, the number, several, 600 pages or whatever it was,

you have to do media tours, you have to do these interviews. I think his publisher had a lot to do with this. I think the publisher both in Germany and McMillan(ph) here in the United States said if you're going to do this book, you are going to have to do interviews. And he did a series of interviews right after that for television and for radio and did them later on, there was a second book, which I was not involved whit and I know nothing about. I had had just about enough at one point, but I think that was it and I do believe that there was a feeling that he was now being recognized. Remember Albert Speer also, if he'd been hanged, would have gone down with Göring and all the rest of them, that would have been it. Albert Speer came out at the end of 20 years in prison and had a chance to be rehabilitated, I don't know if it was that, but to at least to a person again, in the society and with enough clout in the society to be interviewed by the press, to ask his opinions. I don't think in that sense it's any different from any of the people who came up in post war Germany and were interviewed. I think he also was grasping and groping to try to find his way back to his family. I mentioned that the impression I got of his six children, all of whom were born before he went to prison and therefore didn't see him for 20 years except twice a year, were very, very distant and almost isolated from him. I never got the feeling while I was there, in 10 days that there was any great love, the kind of love you see, almost in a physical love, a touching or a kiss, I never saw that. Now that may be only the Germanic thing and he didn't want to show it, so it's hard to tell, it's like you never know the inside of a marriage, but that was the impression I got. I got the impression also that the man who came out of one of the worst of the fascist dictatorships in the world had several children who were very left wing. And I'm sure this bothered him.

Q: Did you get any sense of sadness ever from him? We sort of touched on that earlier, but I'd like to ask it again, about anything? Perhaps about his family? It was just what you're saying.

A: That's interesting. If I were to put it, that's a marvelous question because I would say there was always a sense of sadness. I don't know whether the sadness was created by 20 years lost without the family, now back to the family. You have lost 20 years, you have come out of Spandau and you've lost 20 years. I never got the feeling of a sense of joy, a sense of freedom, a sense of release. But you're saying that now, if I had to put it in my own word, I think there was, over the 10 days, a sense of sadness. Even and a sense of propriety, of a proper human being who, when he went to the restaurants, as I mentioned, was cordial, was pleasant. But was never hi Joe, you know, how, nice to see you, ever, always proper. Just as the suits, between the two of us, both of us wearing suits, were always proper. We never called one another by first name. We never touched more than a handshake. I always had the underlying feeling of if had won I would be dead, but I pushed it aside, I had to. And interestingly enough, on the day to day discussions, it was just like speaking to you, it was fine, it was we talked. I mean he wasn't going to do anything to me and I wasn't going to strangle him and so we put that aside right at the beginning and we were going to try to get to the bottom of something to which we really never go to the bottom, bottom and never would and nobody ever will, about Albert Speer. The closest one who got to it was Gidda Serany(ph) and even there you get very little of Albert Speer. Course when he wanted, when he was annoyed or upset, he let her know it. And she spent four years with him.

Q: What you've said to me before our interview began, you can't imagine spending four years with him.

A: Oh well, yeah, in speaking of Gidda Serany(ph) spending four years with Albert Speer, I am almost overwhelmed at the professionalism and the bulldog grit it must have taken to do this, in four years that, I could not have spent four years with Albert Speer. Well, I'm also type A, so that, you know I, 10 days is quite enough, that's usually... The thing that she did that I could not do and that I

think is critical to any, any journalist or any film maker who interviewed Albert Speer, has to realize that none of us could have done what she did, which was to question him and then move to the people he mentioned in his answers to find out if A, they were true, if B these people had seen them and remembered them as Albert Speer remembered them and then to go to the archives and find out if either one was telling the truth. This takes a lot of time and a lot of, of, of digging and she did it and I admire the book as a result. I mean the book is overwhelming and I've written to her as you know and I've gotten an answer and I would like to meet with her, in a shared experience, mine 10 days and hers four years. I would like to find out how she could spend four years there, doing it. And in reading the book and I read it carefully, I'm back in the middle again, reading it carefully, I just quoted from page 167. I'm fascinated by the fact, the determination and the fact that she kept up with this thing and questioned everything down the line, including the wives and the children of some of the people who had been at Eagle's Nest and Bertasgarten(ph). By the way, I did visit there when I was stationed in Salzburg and I, Bertasgarten(ph), Hitler's Eagle's Nest home, or his hideout, the Eagle's Nest in Bertasgarten(ph), there they had destroyed the SS barracks right below and the Eagle's Nest was still there and I remember going through saying, well Hitler was here, you know, this is where Hitler was. That was kind of an unreal experience, this was speaking to the man. But getting back to your, your said, did I see a sadness, I think yes, I think deeply there was, there was a sadness, there possibly was a feeling that people didn't quite understand why he had done some of these things. Witnesses saying if you were 29 and the head of state asked you to be his architect, it was, it was an experience I guess that any of us, particularly the Jewish boy from the Bronx would always carry with me and I do. And when I found the tapes, I could not believe, I didn't know what had happened to them and there are still two missing, I'm going to find them. I don't know where the films are, I would like to have them. Actually, what I would like to have is the original, the

uncut film. The 10 minute cuts are nothing more than 10 minute cuts. I would like to find the original film somewhere. I don't know if that's possible, it's too far away. Film was probably destroyed.

Q: How did the experience and perhaps not even immediately, but meeting him, spending those 10 days with Albert Speer, how did that change your understanding of Nazi Germany? Or perhaps of one Nazi?

A: Let's put it this way, I've never understood Nazi Germany, just as I have never understood, I have never understood the kind of destruction that went on in Nazi Germany, almost the engineers at work. I can more easily understand Biafra, I can even understand Vietnam, I can understand Nigeria, I can understand tribal warfare. I don't like it and I think it's horrendous, but I can understand this because people do react this way. Bosnia is the classic example of the problems of 100 years back. But when I look at Nazi Germany and I haven't changed my opinion there, I felt exactly the same way before and I feel exactly the same way now. The anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism in the first place I find difficult to understand. I find anti anything of a group or a race, difficult to understand. But when you look at what Nazi Germany did, with something like, was it 600 concentration camps or places of death, when you look at the use of slave labor, when you look at the deliberate way in which they did this, I still don't understand it. I had known people who left Germany, who are not Jewish, because they understood that this was a country they couldn't live in. If it happened in my country, I have often said I probably would have to leave. So has it changed, did it change my feeling about Albert Speer? Before I met Albert Speer, I had no real feeling of Albert Speer. He was a person. I knew he was, in fact I knew him as the Minister of Armaments, I had forgotten that he was an architect, I then, as you begin to read you realize, yes, yes, yes, I know he is. I had no feeling about him before. My feeling about him now is a rather distant one. I don't

feel any great warmth toward, toward him and that experience. I still can't understand how and why he did it. In terms of Nazism and what happened in Germany, I cannot for the life of me understand how any country, how the people in any country could do what they did and how they did it and the methods in which they did it. This is not meeting someone in war, it's not even the SS man killing an unarmed American soldier or an American soldier in Melai(ph). This is something that is beyond my understanding. So in that sense there's been no real change. I still have difficulty when I go back to Germany. I still have, I must admit this, I have difficulty in the following way. I've had to go back to Germany on several, and this had nothing to do with the younger Germans because what happens to me is when I go to a hotel lobby and I see people my age, I'll be 73 in August, when I see people my age sitting there in suits and drinking and having a great time, I mentally put SS on their lapels. And I'm sorry, this is the way it is and I've spent a lot of time there and I don't have to like everything and I don't have to like everybody. I'm glad Germany's a democracy, I'm glad the east and west have gotten together. I don't have to like going back. I find myself very uncomfortable there, I find the German language very uncomfortable. I mean this as honest as I can be with you. I have not forgiven and I certainly don't forget. And what I feel is that places like the Holocaust Museum must open everywhere and that the younger people particularly, must go there and must see it. Because with the revisionists, remember, those of us who have met Albert Speer, those of us who have been in the concentration camps are going to be dead and then the revisionism is really going to start, how can you believe all those dead people? And this is not far-fetched, this is what will happen. And so all of these places are important because there are people like me who have not forgotten. And it's not a matter of forgiving, I don't have to forgive, you see. I also don't have to forget. So I have not changed my feeling about Nazism and Albert Speer is a story that took place and if I can have offered something to the Holocaust Museum in the

tapes, so much the better, that's good because I think that these memories have to be kept and I think that people have to be able to go there and hear them.

Q: Can listen to him and decide for themselves in part.

A: Exactly.

Q: And compare it with the interview with you.

A: Yes. And listen and decide and read the books and thank goodness for the books. And interestingly enough I find that these books are now starting to come out so many years later, I would have expected they would have been 10 or 20 years before. Of the new Goldhagen(ph) book which talks about the guilt of all of the normal Germans, the people who used to go and watch executions. But you know, that's interesting, too. Let me not just take off on that because there are parallels. Timmerman(ph) in his book and the torture that he underwent in Argentina has a horrifying discussion with his torturer, who does his torture as a normal job, then says to Timmerman(ph) after the torture, "Listen, my son wants to get into college, do you know somebody who can get him into college?" So if we talk about the banality of evil, you know, Hannah Arons(ph) great statement, this happens in a lot of places, there are torturers and was I any different when I watched the hangman and I went away with no feeling about them? So people are capable of this. But nobody has ever done it on the scale of the Germans. Nobody has ever actually built gas chambers to put people in, had collected hair and has collected teeth and has collected shoes. And has had this virulent anti-Semitism, that is bad enough in the world as it is, but has done something like that that is inconceivable. So I don't have to forgive them. I also don't have to like them.

Q: I hear you talking, it's almost like a visceral thing inside of you, it's not necessarily something you've, I mean obviously you've thought about it, but it's, you're talking about a visceral reaction for instance, when you're in Germany.

A: Absolutely it's visceral, I mean, the intellectual, let me give you an intellectual thing. Intellectually I would say, well yes, you know, after all it is that time, there is a new generation, which there is and there were good people and there were bad people and it's done and gone and I can't do this. Of course it's visceral. It's visceral also because I, I see the stirrings in other areas. I see the stirrings out in, with the Michigan Militia, I see the stirrings with the anti-Semitism that's come up. I see the stirrings with a presidential candidate who is anti-Semitic, whether you like it or not, he can say he's not and he has Jewish people on his staff, he's anti-Semitic. If you see these stirrings as a Jew, you always are aware of it. You're always careful, that this is something that can affect you, this is something that can kill you. It has happened. And so my only reaction can be visceral. Because we have the antennas out, as the Blacks, the African-Americans have their antennas out to everything that's done, whether it's getting, can't get a taxi in New York cause they pass you by, to the anti-Black statements that are made. You always have your antenna out as an African-American. Well you always have your antenna out as a Jew. And so my reaction to an Albert Speer or my reaction to Germany is totally visceral. And I'd be lying if I said that well I, you know I have to be intellectual about it now, I can't. But as I said to someone, I was interviewed on a travel show once, I had done a travel book and I've done a lot of travel films and somebody said to me, "What's your favorite country?" And I said, "Italy, I love to go to Italy, I had an office in Italy for five years." And he said, "And which countries don't you like?" I said, "Well I don't think it's up to me to tell you on this program which countries I don't like." And I never did on the program, but the point is, having worked in 60 countries, I can like 59, I don't have to like all 60 countries and

that may be very unintellectual, it may be very visceral, that's how I feel and I think I've got to remember that and I want the Holocaust Museums to make people remember what these people did, even if they're all dead, that it can happen again.

Q: Are you glad you interviewed Albert Speer?

A: Oh, absolutely. Wouldn't have missed it for the world, even though I turned it down the first time, I mean, oh of course, I'm, it was another part of the experience you have as a film maker, it's another part of the experience you have as a documentary film maker. It's the kind of thing where people say, "Oh you've led a very exciting life." I say, "Well it's not over yet, you know." And we're going to China and Japan next year on a job. But yes, it's, I'm glad I met Albert Speer. I'm glad that I have worked in countries where there have been dictators, not quite as bad as Hitler, but where I have been able to see first hand what went on. Whether I got anything more out of my visceral feeling since Albert Speer? Not really, but that was a part of the experience and I am very glad that I went over there.

Q: Do you think that he had sat across from the table very often with Jews and answered questions?

A: Possibly some reporters, I don't know. He knew I was Jewish, certainly. I mean if he didn't know, somewhere along the line I'm sure I told him about my Bar Mitzvah, you know. But I have a way of letting, but he knew and he knew Alma was Jewish, so he had in essence a Jewish client and a Jewish producer. The rest of the crew were all American and German and Austrian. But yes, I, I, I think, I think that he had at some point, I don't think at this point it made any difference to him. You know, we did not come on as Jews if there were other reporters who did interview him, but at the same time, deep in my gut was always the feeling that I am Jewish and this man was number two in Hitler's staff.

Q: Did you ever feel any responsibility in terms of representing Jews when you were sitting there asking questions?

A: No, I don't think I represented Judaism, you know, I, it's a good question, no, no I don't think I did and I don't think it was there, you know, you're, I would say that, at this point I look at it and say, yeah it's kind of interesting that a Jewish producer was sent to interview this man who had used slave labor and who would have been dead if he'd won, I, we go back to that whole thing that sent me over in the first place. But I never represent, I can't represent Judaism, Judaism is diverse, as diverse as, as any of the religions, so and I'm sure there are Jews, cause I read there are Jews who have forgiven at this point, say we must move on. And whether that's there way of handling it or not, that's fine. My way of handling is that we never forget.

Q: Did you like anything about Albert Speer?

A: Did I like anything about Albert Speer? I, that's a wonderful question in that I can't think of anything I liked as a very positive thing, but I can't think of anything I disliked. He was, as I say, comfortable with me, at least outwardly. He was a gentleman. He was a very gracious host. I mean we wanted for nothing while we were there. He did take us through the town to the places he knew. He answered the questions, he never balked. I didn't dislike anything, he was one of the easiest interviews in the sense of a day to day relationship over a period of 10 days. What did I like? I can't think of anything that I would say I really, you know I really liked. No one's ever asked me that question.

Q: Do you think you learned anything from him? I mean, 10 days is a long time, you often go away from an interview with something.

A: What I think I learned is that a great many people in my generation were not at all sorry for what happened. The reaction that these people had. I mean I was fairly aware of it before then, having

worked in Germany several times and having lived in Germany after the war, that the people of my generation were not at all sorry that it happened, were not at all guilty about what happened. Maintained and retained many of their feelings, probably anti-Semitic and so on, about the Jews, about Germany. I learned also first hand, that the younger generation, for the most part seem to reject that. They may not want to hear about it, but they seem to reject it. The fact that the word got around that we were quote friends of Albert Speer and they'd walk out, meant that that there was their visceral reaction to somebody who was there as a quote friend of a Nazi. So that even in my mind I have a great division where I go right down the line and say there is a whole group that I have, I may not like listening to their German because it reminds me of that time, but I don't hold them responsible for it. I find that I have difficulty even today, meeting people of my generation in Germany or who are Germans and are traveling. I get the gut feeling, over and over again when I go a place like the Algove(ph) or I go to Spain and I see groups of Germans traveling, of my age, I get the immediate feeling and I must admit this, that while the Jews lie in their graves, there's a Jewish term for that, they are out enjoying themselves. I still have that feeling and I resent it. Not my feeling, I resent their enjoying it.

Q: What's the Jewish term?

A: Liktendred(ph), lies in, lies in, in hell. While the Jews liktendred(ph) and I, that's the feeling I get, it's the feeling I have wherever I go. I must tell you, in terms of my emotional feeling, if I go to Greece and there are groups of German tourists come in to a restaurant, my stomach knots. Now that's, you talk about visceral, I have no intellectual feeling about it any more, I should actually pay no attention to it. So I am in that sense very deeply a Jew and very deeply involved with what happened in the Holocaust and very deeply involved with what the Nazi's did and don't ever want to see it happen again to anyone. But I still, if I, I have a job coming up where I may have to go back

to Germany and I would like, frankly to have that country dropped from the group that we're going to and it won't be and I will be a good professional film maker again and I will go. It has nothing to do with boosting Germany or anything, it just happens to be a business thing. But I have that feeling and I make no excuses for it.

Q: It's a powerful feeling.

A: Well it's, it comes out as you see.

Q: I mean it's not a feeling that was given particularly by your family, it really came out of your experience as a young man.

A: Yeah, I think it comes deeper than experience as a young man, I think it comes from I am convinced that there is an ethnic depth in people. I'll give you an example. When I hear Middle Eastern music and this includes Arabic, Israeli, any Middle Eastern music or Russian music, something deep within me comes to life.

Q: Good?

A: Good. Good feeling. I mean I happen to be one who can't understand why the Arabs and the Jews fight. There is a very deep, Middle Eastern, ethnic level there so that I think, my wife Cheryl has the same feeling, I'm not the only one. Or she'll look at me and all of a sudden I stiffen with pleasure because the music gets to me. Now that didn't come from my background as a child and it didn't come from what my parents taught me because except for my Bar Mitzvah, I really was not a very good Jew. But I am a very good Jew as a Jew because that's how I feel. So there is an instinctive Judaism there, don't ask me to explain it.

Q: Okay. I actually haven't asked you anything about this and I think there's probably some things you can say about it. What sense did you get of Speer's relationship with Hitler?

A: Very close, very close. All the photographs, all the photographs that he has, all of the memorabilia, his home movies. I had a feeling that Speer, although I notice Gidda Serany(ph) says at the beginning was not part of the inner circle, I got a feeling that he was very close. And I have a feeling that he respected the man as the leader of his country and I believe he always did and I don't believe he ever changed his mind, through the end of the war.

Q: Even though in your tapes you do talk about that point where Albert Speer gets sick and he doesn't see Hitler for awhile and as he explains it, he's pulled out of his sphere of influence and then when he sees him again, something has changed. So even after that change, you don't think that he fundamentally changed?

A: No, I don't think he fundamentally changed. I think this was the, this was the dynamics and I can't speak too you know, authentically, but I think it's the dynamics of what happened. Remember this whole inner group were always close to Hitler. You move out for awhile like in any corporate group and then you move in and you've got to work your way back in again. I think he always respected Hitler. I don't know how he felt at the end of the war, I don't know how he felt before he died but my feeling was that he was close.

Q: He says in the interview that you did with him that he feels embarrassed, I think, he might have even said shame and he is very halting when he says this, at declaring his admiration for somebody who became such a monster. So what's going on there, he's using the right terms for Hitler, he's calling him a monster, but he's also saying that he really cared deeply about this man.

A: See, this is the point, when anyone interviews a man like Albert Speer. Is he saying this because this is politically correct? That was a term that was not around then. Is this the answer he expects me to have? I mean suppose he said to me and this is only instinctive about his feeling about Hitler through the time. Suppose he said to me, "Oh this man was a monster, I hated him at the end, I'm

glad he was dead." Do you think I could believe it for one minute? Not when he was involved with the armaments almost right up until the last minute. Not until he was the heir apparent, the heir apparent to Hitler if Hitler had been killed. No, I have a feeling that we're back to his coming up with the answers of 20 years in Spandau. That's a feeling. But then again, I'm a very prejudiced man about that whole thing, so you know, in...

Q: And you were there, you spent 10 days with him, so some of the information that you'd gather about him are feelings and nuances about ways he said things and his body language, that sort of.

A: Well the body language was pretty much the same throughout. Almost rigid, comfortable. Comfortable in his answers. As I say I think he thought about them through all that time. But in terms of body language, look, he was, there was always the gap between us, let's face it, I mean remember, always the business suits with the ties. I was doing my job and he was answering the best he had thought about answering through all these years. I think he had come up with the answers to every one of the questions that I asked him and possibly not what Gidda Serany(ph) did cause she really went in depth, but that any reporter coming there would have asked him. I found no great revelation in anything I read later on.

Q: Did you understand Hitler any better after you'd done this 10 day interview?

A: No. You know, I, it's, if, no I didn't understand Hitler any better and I don't think that I could have gotten that out of this. Probably is one of the world's great monsters, I put with him all the other people who were with him as just as monstrous. It was not only Hitler, they had to go along with him, they knew what was happening. I not only don't understand Hitler any better, I don't understand the virulence of the entire group around him, including Goebbels, including Göring, including VonShurack(ph), including all of them. No, I said before I would never understand the Nazi movement. Oh, I understand then, I know, understand what it did, I understand everything for

after World War 1, I understand all of the things that happened. I hear a great many of the things happening today. The populist thing about look what they did to you in the war and look what the corporations are doing to you, this was Hitler's whole schtick and I understand it after the war. I understand also the thing of uniforms and Nuremberg and so on. I can even understand them forming the army, I can even understand them having a war. What I can't understand is what they did to 20 million people, deliberately.

Q: Did Albert Speer ever bring up some of the delicate questions himself in a way to sort of pre-empt you, perhaps bringing up the issue of what he knew about the Jews, what was happening to the Jews and when?

A: No, as I recall, now remember this is recalling. As I recall what, the pattern was pretty well set in that unless there was a question he never really volunteered anything, except to bring me in to see Hitler's drawings and the architectural things and the home movies, these were volunteered. In terms of the answers to the questions, not really. Now I have not heard the tapes in a while, you'd have to hear that, I really don't remember. I remember it being a pattern, I had my list and this is pretty much what we went to.

Q: With the things he volunteered, just listening to you just say that right now I'm wondering, was he just trying to show you just another slightly different angle so that perhaps it being more three dimensional for you? What's your thoughts on that?

A: Well it's hard to say. Again, I can't remember all the nuances of the time I was there. He was professional. It's the best I can say.

Q: Did he say anything that surprised you?

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

Q: Was there a moment in the 10 days that Albert Speer caught you off guard, said something that surprised you, perhaps even did something?

A: Not in terms, I don't remember anything, I'm sure there must have been some times and I'm sure that some of the questions, but you asked the question, the first thing that came to mind was something that has been made very available at this time and in fact I saw it not too long ago on a, on a documentary about the war, which had nothing to do with Albert Speer or Adolf Hitler. And it had to do with the problems that came up in armaments during the end of the war. The Germans were the first to develop jet planes, or to develop flyable jet planes, which would have totally destroyed the armada's of the allies, considering everything was a prop plane at the time, the flying fortresses and so on and the P38's and Hitler did not trust the jet engine, it had no propeller. And therefore, up until the very end, he refused to let them use it. At the very end he let them use it. By that time though, Speer could not develop enough planes to make any difference. But there was a fascinating thing, it's like somebody developing the atomic bomb before us, so of all the things that he mentioned to me, that sticks in my mind as something that I had not heard of and now as I say, has become part of the historians, you know, the historians whole group of books and films and so on. But that to me, surprised me. Other than that, in terms of the answers, remember I said my feeling was, through the entire time that he had come up, I could not come up with a question except asking what he said to his wife and his children, in the visits to Spandau, that he would not have thought of before. A very bright man, a very bright man. Under some other form of government would have been a brilliant executive possibly, I can't say architect because I was never very impressed with his architecture as I was not impressed with Hitler's drawings, but was bright enough, was presentable enough, was articulate enough. Certainly spoke English quite well. Could

have been a really well known, great man in some other country. But he never really, we never really threw one another. He never really threw me, I had my questions, I always had to keep my deep feelings buried, which I did and he in turn had thought of every single one of the answers.

Q: Do you think that, do you think that what you were just mentioning, that he's very bright, he could have, he could have just been such a shining star in another country, another government, do you think that might be part of where his sadness comes from?

A: Possibly, that's something that you know, I can't, if it were me, if I felt that way, yeah, I would, I would say so, look at there but for the grace of God. Just as I say, if he had won, I'd be dead. Or I'd be slave labor, yeah if he'd been, but he wasn't, he was a part of Hitler's entourage and he was very much, very much in favor with Hitler through most of the time. He was a part of the inner circle, he was for a long time the second in command, if Hitler had died he would have gotten the, the, he would have been head of Germany. It's a remarkable thing for a man who at that time was in his 30's and then 40's. I asked him about Spandau you know, but basically I got the fairly standard answers, he, it fascinated me also, was I guess one of the other things, surprised I mentioned that he had showed me the original manuscript. If you could take pieces of torn out paper, just take about 600 pieces of skinny, torn out paper, no more than three inches, with a tiny Germanic hand written on it, then you'll know what the manuscript is, this whole stack of papers which he got out, I guess got out through Margaretta(ph), but that was the manuscript of his book. So remember this, he was writing that book while he was still in Spandau. The thing that also bothers me, I think, if I think about it, and you say you know, what were my real feelings about him. Remember also that the book changed in context from the German to the American version. The whole section on anti-Semitism was toned down. The whole, a whole, no, yes, well no, when you say after I did the interview, no, they, it was being done while I was doing the interview, that book was not out, I only

saw the book in manuscript, but I had not seen the German version. But the German version and the English version do not match, in several important places, because for the American audience, they felt they could not be as strong in some of the areas. So now that gives you a kind of a suspicion, both about Albert Speer and the people who controlled the publication of the book.

Q: You talk about how he sort of gave you what he wanted to, he'd thought these answers out and yet it seems that in a way, it's like his self portrait and that's revealing too, what he does want to say about himself, Albert Speer and what he doesn't, that while you were, you feel that you weren't able to puncture it too much, it's still a self portrait.

A: Of course, this is what he wants you to think, this is what he wants you to feel, he certainly is not going to come out as a self proclaimed monster, which by the way I don't think he was. You see, yes he used slave labor and he may or may not have been anti-Semitic. Interestingly enough, I'm not sure. He may have been one of those, those, apolitical people in terms of his anti-Semitism, I don't know. Certainly he was not one of the virulent ones, certainly he was not a Goebbels. On the other hand, he was a part of the hierarchy and you know, the responsibility is there, it's like the responsibility is there. When you have a doctor and the nurse is hostile to you, the doctor is responsible. Well it's the same thing here, he's responsible. I mean he was a top man in this group. So yes, he wanted you to feel, as anyone does, a certain way. He wants to present and to communicate to you how he, Albert Speer feels about it and come out looking pretty, at least fairly good, not as a monster. Remember also, he was shrewd enough and he was smart enough not to get the death penalty. And he had to maintain that too, he could not be one of the monsters that was put to death.

Q: You talk about burying your own feelings. Was there a time after the interview, in the day or two after, leaving Germany, or even a month or two later, when at some point the feelings surface and what was that like or, or did you basically just erase it somehow?

A: No, I never erased it and the feeling did surface and after leaving, as with any reporter or film maker, I would like to have had the 10 days again because there were places I think I was too kind. There were places I felt and still feel that my follow up was not strong enough. At the same time, it's now 20-20 hindsight, I now know a lot more. In fact if I were to see him again, I don't want to see him, he's dead, but if I were to see him again, I would have a lot more questions and a lot of them would come from research that's been done by people like Gidda Serany(ph). I didn't have it at that time. Remember, he had just come out of Spandau a few years before or a year or two before. That's another thing that we've got to keep in mind, he came out of prison, he was a prisoner, he came out, he's now with the family, he's in Heidelberg(ph) where half of the town hates him and the other half of the town puts the red carpet down. He's with his family, he'd not seen Margaretta(ph) for, more than once a month for 20 years. He'd not seen these kids who grew up without him, some of whom as I say I was sure was left, were left of center. And so, coming out of prison as any prisoner, aside from the horrendous things that were done by the Nazi regime, coming out as any prisoner, he had a lot to get used to. And even getting used to sitting down at a table with a group of film makers and his wife and his children and having a dinner. Always at the head of the table, very stiff. Very, very stiff.

Q: Definitely, I think you've just used a few words, but that image comes across very clearly, this man, who was rigid and his whole body was controlled. You are showing, you're pulling out some pictures.

A: I, yes, I am pulling out the pictures, look at any of these. Look at me, pointing my finger and look at him answering the questions. Here you have an even better one, this is a picture of me with Albert Speer and Alma Trynor(ph) on the lawn. I should call it my Greek period, I had long sideburns and a black mustache, I had black hair then you notice.

Q: Describe him ____.

A: And if I describe Albert Speer, if you talk about body language, the hand, he's sitting rather stiffly in the chair, leaning a little to the right, which is very typical, hands clasped, legs crossed, as my legs were crossed. The difference in the two of us is that I have the whole type A finger up, pointing a finger and asking a question and he, with almost a little bit of suspicion on the question and that was very typical. These pictures are not at all unusual, this was very typical about the whole, well we didn't interview over 10 days, we interviewed I think six or seven days of the 10 days, we had to get to know him, we had to get to know the community, we had to talk about what we were going to talk about without giving away the questions and so we were I guess six days or seven days out there. And the crew came in and we filmed. But if you look at the photographs of him and if you look at any of the photographs of any of his interviews, the man was never relaxed.

Q: And actually it's different from the photographs you see of him before the end of the war because he looks very relaxed, often when he's with Hitler, if he's walking around showing some piece of architecture.

A: Yes, but if he's going to have an image, if he's going to make this image, remember he no longer is Hitler's number two man, he's no longer on the Russian front looking at the tanks, he's no longer doing the architecture or running the armaments program, which was a huge program, the man did a remarkable job, considering the fact he had slave labor, but the man did a remarkable job in picking

Germany up from the ruins of most of the bombing and actually turning out the tanks and the planes. He was a very, very effective bureaucrat.

Q: He clearly was very, very bright, the work he did and then even what he learned and studied when he was in prison. Were you ever intimidated by him in that sense, in the intellectual sense of jousting about the truth with a man like that?

A: No, I was never intimidated, but I think I knew all the time I spoke to him that I was going to get the answers that he had well prepared. I was never intimidated because basically you have to remember that deep, deep down, there was the anger and the gut feeling that he still was Hitler's number two man, that it was an experience and it was an experience. I never, never forgot the fact that I was a Jew speaking to Hitler's number two man on a very civilized kind of a lawn, you know, going in to lunch or dinner in a few minutes. It's a very weird, surrealist feeling. But no, I never felt intimidation. Nor was he the kind of man who intimidated. Which is another point. A lot of it had to do with him too. He was not arrogant. We think of some, particularly when we see the movies with the Nazi arm bands and you think of the arrogance and the arrogance of the Gestapo and so on, this was not the kind of man he was and he may not have even been that during the war, but I don't know.

Q: Just a moment ago we were talking about the emotion finally coming out, I don't know if it did at one point and we got sidetracked, I want to just come back to that question.

A: About his emotion?

Q: No, your emotion finally coming out at one point or did it just?

A: No, never. I was very careful never to let that emotion out, I could not.

Q: No, afterwards, afterwards.

A: Afterwards sure, it came out the moment I left. It came out as I discussed it with other film makers, when I discussed how you handle a thing like this, was it handled properly, how do you handle a thing like this where if you set up as we said at the very beginning, the structure of a Jew from the Bronx going to see Hitler's number two man. And nobody can ever answer it, about the only thing everyone agrees with is that you have to keep your anger deep down, that you really can't, and as he said, I, I, I obviously must have been very funny at some point because if he said I hide everything I feel behind a sense of humor, he knows or knew what I felt. I mean let's not kid one another, he knew I was Jewish, he knew what I felt, he knew what I must have felt. So if he said a thing like that, just as I said, he hid everything he feels behind 20 years in Spandau. We both were wearing the gloves.

Q: And the mask.

A: And the mask, yeah. Which in a sense is not the best way to get an interview, it's easier to interview a doctor who's a neurosurgeon, ask him about brain surgery.

Q: That's what I wanted to ask, I don't know if there's something we haven't touched on that we should say about the interview, about the tapes.

A: The tapes, there's nothing more I can say about the interview or the tapes, I would like to find the other two tapes, remembering that they also were accompanied by film and so it would be interesting to see at this point if one of the questions you asked about came off on film. Was there any point where he showed any of this other reaction, emotion or whatever it may be, discomfort. I would have to see the uncut film because even the cut film would only have the correct answers. But in seeing the uncut film you would know because we went on I don't know how many rolls or how many hours we had. In order to do 10, 10 minutes films, plus a film on the architecture in a totalitarian regime, which was 10 minutes, you're talking 100 minutes of finished film. I don't recall

what we shot, we must have had a truckload of film when we went back because we kept rolling through all these things. Today with videotape, it would be cheaper, but...

Q: Yeah ____ didn't you have to stop for the airplanes?

A: Yes, well every time, every, one day when we were out there, we surveyed it for the first couple of days, it was perfect, the birds were chirping and the first day we were going to film, there was a storm over Frankfort, we didn't know this, all we knew is a jet came over. Then another jet came over, then another and you know that, that's it for tape and I kept stopping the tape and stopping the film and he said, "Oh," he said, "whenever there's a storm in Frankfort, the planes circle over Heidelberg(ph). So for about two hours we had nothing but jets circling over Heidelberg(ph). For a film maker this is death, this is terrible. Overall it's, look, it's been with me this many years, I still read about him, I still can't get enough about him. If I see him on television on some film about World War 2, I still sit up and take notice. Having lived in Berlin right after the war, I know the VonSay(ph) house, I was very involved with that whole area. As a Jew in Germany, there were, there were lots of problems. In fact, to show how it works, when Cheryl first came over and to show my anger, we were living in Max Schmelling's(ph), Max Schmelling(ph) was a boxer, was a heavyweight boxer, who was the German champ, who was beaten by Joe Louis and in _____ in Berlin and a woman came to the door. We had just received a package from the States to supplement our GI rations, which were plentiful anyhow. And there were lots of people there, there were lots of displaces persons. There were the camps, the DP camps and we did know some DP's and we did go to the camps and we were very involved with them. And in radio, I was involved with the documentaries. And there was a knock on the door and a woman came to the door and Cheryl came to the door and the woman said, "I'm hungry, is there something I can have to eat?" And I said, "No." And Cheryl said, "You can't do that to somebody who is hungry." And she

went in and she got a can of salmon and she gave it to the woman. And we had our first big married fight, because I was so angry that they had starved people, that they had put them in gas chambers, I mean I don't have to go through the whole litany, they had done all these things and she said you can't turn a woman who is hungry away. So obviously then and obviously even to this day, my gut feeling is, I find it difficult to go back. I find it difficult to hear German spoken. I find it difficult to meet someone of my generation who was in Germany in 1940, '41, '42. Can't help it. So in that sense I've come away with a very, an even stronger emotional feeling and my speaking to Albert Speer is just one of those little bricks in that whole thing of building how I feel today and I would do it again, as I said to you before.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay. All right.

Conclusion of Interview.