

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Peter Masters  
August 7, 1998  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audiotaped interview with Peter Masters, conducted by Esther Finder on August 7, 1998 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Bethesda, Maryland and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

## **PETER MASTERS**

### **August 7, 1998**

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**, conducted by **Esther Finder** on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1998, in **Bethesda, Maryland**. This is a follow-up interview that will focus on Mr. **Master's** post-Holocaust experiences. In preparation for this interview I listened to the interview conducted with the Survivors of the **Shoah** Visual History Foundation on November 10<sup>th</sup> of 1996. I also reviewed your book. I will not ask you to repeat everything you said in that interview, instead I will use this interview as an opportunity to follow up on that interview and focus on your post-Holocaust experiences. This is tape number one, side **A**. I'd like to ask you when you were born and where.

Answer: I wa – I was born on the fifth of February, 1922 in **Vienna, Austria**.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

A: My name was **Peter Ferdinand Arany, a-r-a-n-y**.

Q: When did you change your name?

A: My name was changed by war office order on joining the commandos in 1942, I believe.

Q: Did you ever think of going back and using your original name?

A: Of the 86 people who were in my troop, I know of three who changed – who – who took their old name back. Most of us got used to the new names and identities

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very quickly and we – we looked upon this, unless we were attached to the former name, unless they were ancient family names, or this or that, the motivation to go back to the original name didn't exist for many of us.

Q: What languages did you speak in 1945?

A: What name?

Q: What languages?

A: What languages. Well, I was born w – my – my original language was the Austrian version of German, which incidentally has always been a little bone of contention between Germans and Austrians. Austrians feel that the only correct and proper German is spoken in **Austria**, and different parts of **Germany** make the same claim. **Hamburg**, for instance, han – **Hannover**, they think that's – they also think that the claims by the others are absurd, and – and funny. I learnt a little French as a small child, we had a French teacher, a Madame come to the apartment and – and purportedly teach us French, my sister and myself. It didn't really work, didn't go much beyond "**Frère Jacques**." And we didn't really like her; that didn't help. And – however, when – in my school system, we took a fir – a foreign language from the age of 11, and I chose French. The teacher who taught French also taught German and was the fore-master of my class. So he was the administrative, disciplinary head of that class. And he wa – turned out to be one of the well known arch-Nazis of **Vienna**. A published author, who when the Austrian

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writers club, the Pen Club, the International Pen Club, Austrian branch sent a telegram to their Jewish colleagues in **Germany** to express their sympathy upon their book burning and treatment, there were two Austrian authors who refused to sign the otherwise unanimous declaration, and he was one of them. I got barely passing grades in German, which was my best subject, and I switched to the English class because of him. Solely because of him. So I had four years of high school English and I thought I spoke fluent English. That was disillusioned fairly quickly upon arrival in **England**, but I could get by fairly well. I learned a little Spanish before I left. This was really emigration learning other things type of thing. But I don't think there was enough of it to have any impact.

Q: Where were you on **V-E** day, when victory was declared in **Europe**?

A: Victory in **Europe**. I'm trying to think. The – the – strangely perhaps, the impact was not enormous on us because we had felt pretty solidly that we had won, so the – the fact of the – of it becoming official was relatively minor. The date, if I recall, was May – May eight, May eight. At May eight, I believe I was in cadet school in **England**, and there was a little bit of razzmatazz of people celebrating, cheering, what have you. And it – I think many of the cadets thought that now they were more likely to go to the Orient than before. And that concerned me only marginally because I thought the British would surely send me somewhere where my fluent German would make sense. I – I made some halfhearted efforts to get sent to

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**Austria** because that would have interested me, and besides, being to **Germany** for the first time ever, during the fighting, and I had a distaste for going to **Germany**. Some of our people were there and sort of lived it up in occupation, but didn't attract me. The – the – the problem as to – who was and who wasn't a Nazi and so on had already come up when – when we were fighting in **Germany**. And I was told that chances of getting to **Austria** were minimal because they were being supplied from central Mediterranean forces, meaning from **Italy**, whereas **Germany** was being supplied by personnel from northwest **Europe**, from – from our end. Th-The – the army has its own ways and when it came up, where I did go was **West Africa**.

Q: Before I have you going to **West Africa**, can you tell me, in May of 1945, what was your rank, and what – what action had you seen during the war.

A: St-Starting at the beginning, when I was in the Pioneer corps, I was a private and I saw no chance of ever getting promoted to anything, because I was just one of the younger lads who was unloading trains or testing bridging material and so on. And I – I wasn't one of the boot polisher and button polishers, so I – I wasn't a standout to the people on the parade ground by any means. In-In fact, I was a bit of a nonconformist [**indecipherable**]. I was more likely to get in trouble about something than I was to get promoted. So, when I came to the commandos, just prior to **D-Day**, I was made a lance corporal, which was a big deal. It – it's nothing

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really, but as such I was the second in command of my detachment, a five man team, attached to number six commando, we were number 10 commando attaching teams to eight different commandos for **D-Day**. So, I was a lance corporal and was subsequently promoted to be a corporal in the field, which caused a little argument because I said to my colleague and sergeant, who said, I'm making you a corporal and I said, you know, jokingly, want me to stitch on an extra stripe here in – in the front line? And he said, you're damn right. And I said I – you – you mean you have the authority to make me a paid corporal? And he said, who said anything about paid? And I came back as a corporal, largely because one of our detachments had been wiped out and I became a one man detachment. When I came back I was promoted to sergeant and when we went out to **Holland** and **Germany** again, I was a sergeant. And it was then that one of our own, who had been – who – who had become the commanding officer of our detachments, **Kurt Gowza**(ph) who served under the name of **James Griffith**, wanted to send me to cadet school. And I said, at this stage, it's late in the war, do you think it's worthwhile? And I don't want to do the parade square bashing and – and – and pamphlet bullshitting, I just don't want to do it. And he persuaded me to do it, with the help of the brigade major, Sir **Maxwell Hopagow**(ph). He – they – they li – I wanted to talk to the brigadier, if – if – if a commission then happened in the field, **Montgomery** was against commissions in the field unless from dire need, casualties, because he said it leads

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to fraternization through the enlisted men. Which we thought was just fine, and he apparently as a [indecipherable] thought was in – improper. This is sort of regular army smokiness, you know, and – and he s – he stopped quite – quite a few of us got commissions in the field because they were doing a good job. And I – I fairly likely m-might have gotten one, but when I was transferred from one unit to the other, I had to start from square one to build my reputation of being keen and determined and willing to do anything and so on. Which I did. And it led to the i – the notion of going to cadet school. I went to cadet school, and I must say I had a ball. The fact that I – I m – I remember arriving and there were a whole bunch of youngsters out of – out of school who were going to cadet school and they were studying pamphlets. And they ask questions from the pamphlets and I had no idea what th-the answers were, b-but I said, I don't know the name of the plunger of the – this weapon, but we had a rather specialized version of that weapon for a special operation. Then suddenly everybody is listening and they want to know. Well, when it came to the tests, the same thing happened. Some – some weapon sergeant would ask questions and say, ask me about the **Sten** gun. I said, **Sten** gun was not a commando weapon, we used **Thompsons**, which are a higher quality. And the only **Sten** gun I've ever seen was one – a special one for an operation with a silencer. He said, a – a **Sten** with a silencer? I've never seen one. Tell me about it. I said, I'll draw you a picture. And we talked about the **Sten** with the silencer for the rest of



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the examination. He said, I assume you were a weapons instructor. I said, I'm not supposed to comment. You abandon your rank when you are a – a cadet. But some lance corporal who was – had the job of taking the stripes off, relished to take a sergeants stripes off, you see, so he had slashed the sleeve of my best uniform and there were cuts where my stripes had been. And the weapon instructor sergeant who was doing the testing assumed – he could see I'd been a sergeant by – by the cuts on my arm. Well, I – I breezed through this whole thing like nobody's business and then – then came to cadet school, and there I was quite determined to be a nonconformist and a rebel when nonsense was being talked about, you know, pamphlet stuff, and – which often is – is outdated and – and – and has been written, who knows for whom, and – and I would – I would say – well, for instance a question. What use is the **Bren** gun carrier? Hands go up and the cadets – the cadet kept asking questions, you see. And they said, to carry out flanking attacks, and somebody else said something else, and when it was my turn, I said none. The **Bren** gun carrier is no use. I have seen more burnt out **Bren** gun carriers than – than non-burned out **Bren** gun carriers. It's a little [indecipherable] not enough armament. And I said, it is useful possibly for two things, which is to bring up the tea after battle, or if you have nothing and want to fake like you have armor, you run them off somewhere where nobody can see them and the enemy will think you're coming with a lot of tanks, because they make such a racket that they inevitably get shot at

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and – and – and then that's when they burn. And the instructor said, th-that **Masters** is absolutely right, because he had just come back from **Italy** himself, so he knew what I am saying is true, you see? So – so after awhile I found out wasn't that much – I mean, I wa – it wasn't working the way I had thought. I – I thought I'd be a rebel and I found the management agreed with me. Which was in a way, of course, a big help and gratifying and so I graduated very high in my class, and that's the end of that one. Tha – you asked me what rank I was when I graduated. I was, of course, a second lieutenant and was subsequently promoted during my service in **Africa**, aut – almost automatically to first lieutenant and then my time was up. Six years. It was age plus length of service in the British army. So my number was up and I – somebody wanted me to stay as an instructor at the school of infantry and I said thank you but no thank you. Why not? Well, I said, I n – I – I – I relish the illusion of freedom, that I can go wherever I want, whenever I want and not be sent. I've been sent for a number of years now. So even bef – realizing it's an illusion, enough.

Q: While you were serving in **Europe**, did you have the opportunity to visit or to see any of the concentration camps or labor camps?

A: Never saw one. Some of – few of us did. This really depended on what unit you were with, and – and – and chance. And you have to bear in mind, commandos were essentially assault units. And then they – th-the – the people in charge always

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stretched what was an initial assault way beyond our normal role, because we didn't have heavy support weapons, you know. But they had us, so they kept us. And if you didn't happen – well, it – it just so happened that no concentration camp was in the path of where they wanted a – a-a-a – an assault made. These were usually river crossings that they used us for, after the – the initial landings at – on **D-Day** or in **Italy** or in **Sicily** or in **Holland**. So, one of our people of course, as you know, heard his parents might be alive in **Terezin** and went to – to go – go get them, and succeeded. That was extremely gratifying. None of us, the rest of us even have the slightest opportunity to do that.

Q: When the war in **Europe** was over, did you make any attempts to find people that were left behind in **Vienna**, when you had left?

A: I didn't understand that.

Q: When the war was over, did you make any attempts to find any family or friends that were left behind in **Vienna**?

A: **Orndorf**(ph), yes. It seemed hopeless the immediate family insofar as they have not gotten out. We knew that my – my – my grandfather was murdered in **Auschwitz** and we knew that a number of distant relatives had – had – had perished. And other than looking for individual friends here and there, and – and finally – later finding some, not very much finding materialized. There were things like getting in touch again with people who had gone to **Israel**. Friends. Getting in touch

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again with such people as my **kinderfraulein**, my nanny in – in – in – in – who had been in **Austria** throughout the war. In fact, we invited her to come and visit in **London**, and that was very exciting. So, not much in the way of – of finding people that had – that had disappeared. There were some weird things. My – my mother lived in an apartment in **London** and once went to a neighbor to borrow some wrapping paper for a package she had to make in a hurry. And the woman said, well, I have this one, you can turn it over, it's used. And on the reverse side were names and addresses of my father's nephew – two of my father's nephews in **New York**. Since my parents were divorced, my mother never pursued that. And I tried much later to see what I could find it, found some people by this un – very unusual name in – in the telephone directory and called them up and they said, it's just a name we call our firm, and there's no one here by that name. But, it went off into the sand, nothing happened. Of course, you know, people still appear nowadays here and there, and that could theoretically happen. My – I – I'm – I'm still looking for some of my classmates and when I came to **Europe** I used to read the telephone books wherever I was, to see what I could find. And sometimes I'd find a name and sometimes I'd pursue it and call up for some classmate or other, and not find them at home, or in the country or something. And it never really led anywhere. If I came back a few years later and looked in the phone book again, maybe a name was missing and I assumed the person died, or moved. So it – not – not – not very much.

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And by now, anyone older than I is likely to be dead. I mean, purely, technically, you know, you – I-I'm 76 years old. If I start thinking in terms of people who were older – substantially older, 86 years old, how many are there, you know? So you – you find that – that some of this is – is quite – quite hopeless. When I was in **London** just now, a friend of mine whom I haven't seen since 1940-something, actually came from **Munich** to spend the day with me and we talked all day long about the old times. He was especially good friend. I would never have – I would never have recognized him in – in the street, or [**indecipherable**]. And – but – but we had so many common memories that there was no shortage of material to talk about.

Q: Before I ask you about your service in **Africa**, which I will do in a minute, I wanted to ask you, when did you realize the full extent of the genocide in **Europe**?

A: This is a question I – that is very difficult, and I have asked myself that, because no – many a time still, it's very, very hard to answer, because the fact that people were being killed became known almost immediately. And by that I mean the **anschluss** was in 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1938. At that time people were arbitrarily arrested. The brutality in **Austria** was much more immediate than the gradual tightening of the noose in **Germany**. Which of course was a good thing, except if it happened to you. A good thing in that it scared you into action, which it didn't do for many people in **Germany**, because it just got a little worse all the time. Well, in **Austria**

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the brutality was immediate and many people said, let's get out of here and – a – or, any border, quick. And not enough people said that and – and – but – but those who did benefited from that scenario. Oh, people were arrested and in the beginning one asked naively, why were they arrested. And then there were some black humor jests. They were arrested because they had eggs for breakfast. You know, the people were still joking about this sort of thing. And then some of these neighbors or friends who had been arrested, actually were released. And some of them were in very poor condition, having been beaten and goodness knows what. So

[**indecipherable**] became aware that people were being tortured or beaten. And then in some cases one heard that the family received an urn with ashes, saying, shot while trying to escape. Well, shot while trying to escape. If this was some very peaceable neighbor, you know – knew them well, that this was not a man who was going to escape from – from benevolent detention. So there began to materialize a certain awe of, are they coming for me, if they're coming for me, what will happen to me? Are they coming for my relatives? Should one work more actively on getting out, and – and so on. And this is – was a gradually increasing image, and I have a memory. I haven't researched this, but I have a memory that there – I went to the movies once in **England**, and there was a movie – there's – there was a group, you know, like the **Stoogies**, called The Crazy Gang. Funny people in – you know, in – in – movie comedians. And the thing was called, The Crazy Gang in a

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Concentration Camp. Now, that's appalling, isn't it? I mean, I – I – I suppose in a way some of this **Stalag 17** series became from a serious film into a **TV** series that was humorous. It was a comical German and y-y-you remember that thing? Well, The Crazy Gang in the Concentration Camp. One should really try and fish that out and look at it and see how – how appalling it – it might well be. But it shows you the scenario that some people who were aware of the fact that there are concentration camps thought it was a subject matter for a comical film. Now **[indecipherable]** seen from this end of – of – of history or time. So, what I'm using it for here is to illustrate the unawareness of some, how real and how serious it was, and yet the awareness of others, but – but shout it in an ominous **[indecipherable]** of – of nothing, behind which you could not look. And that built and built and built and built until it became a full awareness. When, I cannot put a date on that. Then there – there were stories, and I don't remember any more whether we heard them then or later, of the man who tried to make – make the – the – the British aware – government aware – or first of all, tried to make his Jewish neighborhoods in **Poland** aware and went from village to village saying, **Juden es brennt**. And nobody believed him.

Q: Can you translate that for me?

A: Hm?

Q: Would you please translate that for me?

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A: Oh, Jews – there's fire, it's burning. And – and this is – there were people who were lobbying and – and trying to communicate bec – an-and – and – and failed, at the **Evian** Conference, you – I'm sure you knew. There were good people trying to get the government to do something. Now, some governments did do something. The British government passed a bill in 10 minutes to let 10,000 children come to **Britain**. The same bill was on the floor of Congress and never got off the floor.

Ulterior motives, indifference, take your pick. Politics.

Q: You did some part of your military service in **Africa**. Can you tell me what your duties and responsibilities were in – in **Africa** and what memories you have of that part of your service?

A: Well, first of all, I had an attitude, which said, as **Kurt Vonnegut** says, unexpected opportunities to travel are dancing lessons from God. And I would never have gotten to **Africa**, to **West Africa** in normal circumstances in my life. And I really relished the idea. So there was a shipload of – of young officers who were to go to **Africa**, amusingly, on a ship called the **Jan Sobieski**. That doesn't mean anything to you, but **Jan Sobieski** was a king of **Poland** who was responsible for the relief of **Vienna** from the Turkish siege. He came with the Polish cavalry and relieved fa – **Vienna** and – and saved western civilization, from what was probably a superior civilization of the Turks but we are – haven't gotten to admit that yet. They had social services far adva – in advance of what western civilization



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had. Well, the – the – that – th-there in – in the – in the lounge was this great big portrait of **Jan Sobieski** and I was the only passenger on that ship who knew who it was. We went to **Africa** and the purpose to send us was to train native troops as aid to civil power. Because the British had not yet decided to relinquish the empire. And in case they decided to hang onto the empire, they needed military support, ideally from the local population, hopefully. Well, we didn't ever say that. What we were doing is we were training native troops to wipe out remaining pockets of Japanese resistance in remote parts of the world. You know, there were Japanese soldiers who were holed up on some **Pacific** island, I mean, Oriental – in the **Aleutian** islands, wherever, and who either hadn't heard that they had surrendered 20 years previously, or – well, at that time not 20 years. And every now and again one of them would come out. Well, we were training our people to – our – our native **Ghanaians** -- before there was a **Ghana** [indecipherable] to wipe out these pockets of fanatic resistance. But what we were really doing is training them, you see, to civil power. And I was greatly helped by my attitude, I really liked them. And they really liked me. They had nicknames for everybody. I was called lieutenant aero-plane driver. That was because I wore parachute wings, which – for which I had qualified, and they saw wings and they thought wings must be an aero-plane, and what do you do with an aero-plane? You drive it. So I was lieutenant aero-plane driver. And I talked to them, which many did not. And found it most

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instructive, the different philosophy, just beginning to be materialistic, but by and large, not materialistic. No work ethic. Now, you have to picture that. We are so steeped into our work ethic that we say, if you are industrious you will be rewarded. They say, do-do – don't – don't make work. If things grow by themselves, then sow them and then go and harvest them, but you don't have to work in between.

Q: I'm sorry, I have to interrupt you because I have to flip the tape. Just one moment. [break] – uation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape one, side **B**. Okay, we're back and you were telling me about your experiences in **Africa** and you were talking about the work ethic.

A: Yes, well, the – the Africans were really just beginning in – i-in that area. I mean, the present – the Africans would resent my saying some of these things because they want to be contemporary, modern people. And that's fine, although one can't help but deplore losing certain things. For instance, the most important thing to the men was to talk. They would sit under a shady tree and talk and talk and talk. And that was not something that you would say they are lazy and good for nothing. No, they were doing an important thing, they were talking. It's true that – that that meant more work for the women, but the tradition of that, I guess is so ancient that it – it isn't a thing where you had the feeling that there's going to be a feminist movement saying let the women sit and talk, let the men carry the logs.

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You know, it is a peculiar – a peculiar attitude that said – that admired certain things. I can give you some sample conversations that are favorites of mine. That the European or American countries is showing off too, what they can perceive to be a primitive culture. And so you show them a picture of the Golden Gate bridge. And they say mm, fine bridge. And then comes a little noise, that you learn to hear. It is ah. It's just a little doubt in the admiration. And they say, this bridge, fine bridge. What is it for? A very basic question. You say well, it's so people, obviously, can get from one side to the other. Ah, of course. Ah, why do the people from one side want to go on the other side? Well, some people work on one side and live on the other. Ah, ah yeah. There's no work on the other side. I said, yes, there – there is work on the other side, but some of them – and so it goes. And then I say, well, you're giving me a hard time because obviously they are leading me on, you see. You build bridges, you have bridges for – so, I mean, this is just a – a bigger bridge. Yeah, fine bridge. Ah, how long it take to build this bridge? How much did it cost? Well, they have you, you know, I mean th-the – then – you now would have to demonstrate that it is economically worthwhile to build all our bridges and that it pays, and – and – and that it's – makes more sense than – and so on and so on and so on and so on. And this goes on and now I offer you – imagine what happened when one of the young officers committed suicide. British officers. Far away from home for the first time, unhappy, hot climate, who knows? I was the

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mentor because I was the one they – that talked to them. So the natives gathered around me and said, why? And I said, he had – he was lonely, he had few friends. You're not his friend? I said yes, I tried to be his friend, but he was unapproachable, I couldn't get to him. How is he better now than he was when he was lonely? I'm getting into theology here or whatever, you see, I mean I – so I say – I counterattack. I said, there's nobody ever committed suicide here, your people? That caused a huddle and a long discussion and then they came back and said, maybe two people – no, maybe one lot of people, and then another person. And I said, when you mean – when – when you say a lot of people – well, long time ago, the story, king died. King had 40 wives. Wives were singing pious songs and walked into a swamp, to accompany the soul of dead king. Don't know whether it's true. Is that suicide? I said, well, I suppose so, I don't know. What's the other one? There was this crazy woman, and some people say she jumped into a well, deep well, died. Some people say somebody pushed her into the well. Some people say she fell into the well. But some people say jumped into the well. That's the only one we can think of. And I said, well what does a person do who is very unhappy? You ca – you can't tell me everybody's happy all the time. Oh, he go for bush. That means into the jungle. Maybe drink some palm wine. Go to sleep. Wake up, everything fine. Not bad. You see? So – so – so I'm – I'm – I'm literally learning in many ways, because we are so assuming that in our self righteousness that what we

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do is absolutely the only way, and in a way it explains that when – when – when slavery used some of these very places as a source, and transposed forcibly people who did not have a work ethic and suddenly told them they had to work God knows what hours, that it was very tempting to say they are good for nothing and lazy. And they were not good for nothing and lazy, we were stupid. And now all over the world everybody's sins are coming home to roost. The British empire has fallen apart and they are all coming to **Britain** and – and they used to sneer at the **United States** for having racial problems, and they've been relatively quiet recently. They – it's not a question of racial problems, it's [indecipherable] at the bottom layer objects cheap labor force coming in and so on and so on and so on.

Q: Were you ever asked to serve in **Palestine** by either the British army or by Jewish Palestinians?

A: Well, in a word yes. Not-Not – not – not that specifically. I had a – as a specialist, and a – a fluent German speaker trained in the German armed forces, my last attachment was with all Marine commandoes and the colonel, who was a great soldier, was quite fond of me and after the war we had a drink at the Army-Navy club in **London**. He introduced me to some retired Marine general and – who – who told me how fortunate I was that I had the honor and privilege to serve with Marines – Marine commandos. And the colonel a-asked, what are you doing now? And I said, I'm going to art school, because I – that's was – I was going to be a di –

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graphic designer. And he said, lord bless my soul, whatever for? And I said, I want to be a graphic designer. He said, well, if you are stuck for anything – for something to do, I am taking up my post as inspector general of the **Palestine** police, and I – there'll always be a job for you. I said, thank you very much sir. And my mother had mentioned that to a visiting friend from **Israel**, my th – as a son of my grandfather's partner. And he said – she – she – she mentioned the colonel first of all, before all this took place. And he said he won't live long. And I said – my mother said, good heavens, why? And he said, well we have very – engaged in a war to shake British domination of – of – of what is promised us under the **Balfour** Declaration. And sh – if he is in charge of the **Palestine** police then i-is – there is something very close to total war between us. And so a few days later this conversation I had at the Army-Navy club was reported to him and he said, he should take it. And my mother was outraged, she said, you just said that the man he'd be working with isn't – may not live long and now you want my son to be in that position? And he said, it might be very useful to have somebody in there. And my mother said, but you said it's very dangerous. And he said, dane – what's dangerous? Walks across **Piccadilly** and a tile falls off a roof and kill you. That's dangerous. But Mother was not convinced, and – and i-i-it didn't happen. Now, it's also true that there were services annually, memorial services, what have you, in **Westminster Abbey** and so on. And my – some of my fr – I didn't attend any,

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maybe one, I can't remember. And a – some of my friends told me they went to it and as they came out there were people on either side of the entrance saying psst, come here, I want to talk to you. And apparently they were recruiting. The – the Israelis were recruiting, that is the – the **Irgun**, or whoever, or the **Stern** gang, or I – I don't know. And on the other side the Arabs were recruiting, because they were recruiting for the Arab legion and for what have you. And one of the commando colonels came to command the Arab legion, Brigadier **Young**, whom I knew well in **Normandy** and – and so you see, there were both sides, very weird for – for commandos. I mean, there was a demand for trained people. That still goes on in a way, because when I gave a book talk in **Florida**, a young man came in with a **Rottweiler** on a leach – leash and I – I-I was amazed they let him into the bookstore, and he said, can – do you live in this area? And I said no, I'm just here for a few days. And he said, that's too bad, and I said why? And he said, I belong to a group that is very interested in commando training. So you see, there are jobs everywhere.

Q: Did you ever consider the possibility of – of going to **Palestine**?

A: I first heard about it when I was maybe eight or nine years old, or maybe a little younger. We had a game where you had to pick a nation, you represented that nation. And then when that nation was called you had to pick up the ball and hit somebody with it. You know, throw at them. And there was one boy who always

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said, Palestinian. It was Jewish boy. And I – I must have asked him, why do you want to be a Palestinian? And he said, that's the country of our future. Obviously a – from a Zionist family. And I said why? And he said – he explained it to me as best as a young child could. And I was extremely puzzled, because we were so integrated into Viennese middle class society, that the reaction would have – was why would we go and sit in the desert and become a part of some agrarian society when we are in an intellectual society here and part of **[indecipherable]**. And so it took quite awhile to understand what this was all about. And of course, a lot – a lot of the most material contribution came from **Hitler**, where people suddenly realized that however integrated they – and accepted or honored they thought they were, that didn't count any more. So, the notion of living there didn't really occur until relatively recently when it's part of a very broad overall attitude of mind that I have felt that I could live anywhere and – and relish living anywhere and become part of living anywhere. And I've – I've only been to **Israel** once, and it was absolutely wonderful, and if I haven't recently gone back, it's largely because I have – we have discovered some distant relatives who want to take over if we go there, and we are a little afraid of that because we'd rather be our own – determine on our own where we want to go, what we want to do. And that may be difficult. But we'll – we'll go again. And we have many friends and – and – and



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some family. So I – I'm – I'm not an – I – I'm – I'm pro-Zionist, but not an – an active person likely to make **aliyah** next week.

Q: I'd like to ti – try and get a time frame. When did you leave the continent and go back to **England** for cadet school?

A: And go where?

Q: To cadet school.

A: We had just crossed the line, which I believe was in middle or late March, I have the date, of course, in my book, in '45. And I – I was then sent to cadet school and that would ch – check out with **V-E** day in May, it's a three months course, all right? So you have 45 – spring of '45 cadet school graduating perhaps in early June.

Q: And when were you in **Africa**? When did you get there and how long did you stay?

A: Six months. And shortly after that – I mean, I went first to **Colchester** in **Essex**.

I-I had hoped by the choice of my regiment and because I graduated high, you get your first choice to get to **Oxford**, because I chose to be commissioned in the **Oxfordshire** and **Buckinghamshire** light infantry. And I made mistake. They didn't send me to **Cowley Barracks** in **Oxford**, they sent me to **Colchester** [indecipherable] city, but brimful of soldiers. I was in para – in a barracks where there were three light infantry regiments. Each one had a different drill, totally different drill. So that if you were orderly officer, which you were often, as a junior

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officer, you had to get the orderly sergeant, who was usually an old hand, and put coins on the table. This half crown is me, this florin is you, this sixpence is the bugler, these are the ranks. And now, there were no words of command, it was all done silently and precisely and we marched together for 12 paces and halt. We about face, we do this, we do that, we [indecipherable] bugle – bugles and [indecipherable]. And the town would gather around the parade square, they would know it better than I did, certainly. There was, for instance, no ceremonial march past for the **Oxfordshire** and **Buckinghamshire**. It was a bubble past, being light infantry, so you ran 12 abreast at the bubble, in step, in line and you were the officer out in front saluting the pedestal where the commanding officer stands. And if they don't look lined up properly or in step properly, it's your fault, although you haven't the slightest influence what's happening behind you. I also discovered that – so I had to learn three different drills. I also discovered that the – one of the reasons I had chosen the – the **Ox** and **Bucks** is because their airborne battalion had taken the bridges on **D-Day** and we linked up with them, and they had done a beautiful job taking these bridge intact. And they were delighted to see us, and we them. It turned out they were persona non grata in their own regiment, because the regulars at the base considered them irregular forces, air landing people [indecipherable] pilots, parachutists, what have you, as I was, you see? So the ones with the maroon beret of the airborne were looked at askance, and me with a green

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beret is even worse. And I – I couldn't wait to get out of there, which I managed first of all to be sent to the school of infantry, and that was a course, company commanders course. And that's when the major there said didn't I want to stay as an instructor, because we hit it off perfectly. It was the same principal as the cadet school, I was telling them how it was and they agreed, because they were veterans from this campaign or that. And I turned it down for the illusion of freedom that I described to you. Well, after that, **West Africa** and happy to get out of this place where the people seemed to have the attitude that these irregular force pe – members were coming to take their jobs away [indecipherable] headquarters and God, I would have paid not to take it away, you know? I – I – I wa – I wanted out, out. It's terrible. And – and I'm delighted that my last six months were this extra boon of – of – of – of **Africa** and the preceding course. All were lovely compared to being at the base.

Q: What marketable skills did you have at the end of your military service?

A: Ha, what marketable skills. I had strong cartoons in the army, and I had an older mentor who was a stage designer. And he advised me what to do with my cartoons, which he liked very much. And I had an interview with "**Punch.**" He said, you start at the top. I said, you mean at the bottom? He said no, at the top. If you can't hack it, you go down one rung. Wisdom. Well, they bought two ideas for cartoons and I was so rich that I couldn't believe it. But this is before the commandos and the

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Pioneer corps. I-I got paid like for several months salary for two ideas. And I thought this is a lovely way of making a living. These were not political cartoons, they were like “**New Yorker**” type cartoons. And I drew another batch and I said I would throw a party for the whole platoon, and the – nothing seemed to happen and then a terrible thing. Well, I went to the local pub where I was well known and I said, I-I must give this party. I have a whole batch of cartoons out there and when they come in I’ll have plenty of money and right now I don’t. And they gave me credit and I threw a party, all the beer you can drink for the whole platoon. And the check hadn’t come yet, th-the second installment, but after the party, I think one or two days later, it came saying the editor regrets at this time we are not buying any of the cartoons. And now I had absolutely six months to pay it off, you see. And I didn’t draw a cartoon for a year and a half, in utter depression. Now, I still thought that in that direction was my – my – my future profession. I came out of the army and I made one brief attempt. I talked to a friend of my family’s who was a – a s – journalist. And she wrote things about resorts who then gave her a limousine, and you know the bit. One of my daughters says it’s half a step from prostitution, not journalism, but that’s a matter of t – personal taste. Anyhow, I asked her, do you think there would be some opening as an apprentice journalist somewhere? And she said no, completely hopeless. You might sell one story about your war experience, maybe, but doesn’t amount to much, everybody has stories. And I gave up. She’s

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still writing a – a Austrian cooking column for a Jewish magazine in **London**, very popular. Written several books, still going to all the best resorts. Well, I thought – I – I – I wrote her a note when my – when my book came out, and the movie rights were bought. I haven't heard from her since. Anyhow, I gave up and I decided reluctantly I would have to go to school. So, my mentor, who had sent me with the cartoons, you know, to **"Punch,"** he said, I have a young woman friend who has just graduated from art school, and she said she would be willing to come and meet with you and advise you which school to go to and so on. So we met in his studio and she [**indecipherable**] sort of snippety, brisk young woman, and she said, I went to the Central School of Art and Crafts, it's – I consider it the best school. It's very hard to get in and you probably won't. And sh – I – I – I said, you – you've graduated from there? Yes, she had graduated from there, and she was a German refugee and she had been president of the student union, an elective office. Not bad for a – for a refugee. Well, I was this commando first lieutenant, you see, and I decided to go to that school and become president of the student union, as a matter of – point of honor, you see? And I did both. I – I daresay my jingling uniform helped a bit to boost my portfolio, but it – they accepted me and I went to that school and I learned quite a lot. And after three years, my mother drew my attention to a middle paragraph in a paper that talked about **Fulbright** scholarships. And she said, wouldn't a graduate year be very beneficial for your career? Well, I had just

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begun to go and look for jobs and I found they paid nothing and wanted me to do things that I was not willing to do. I – I – I asked one studio where I went for a job, what would I have to show you that you would hire me? And they produced an extremely realistic painting of a plate of bacon and eggs, wi-with fat bubble in the center, and very real. And that's an illustrator, you know, I mean, I – obviously whoever was talking to me didn't understand where I came from or didn't care. Anyway, I – I said to myself, I shall never be able to do this and what's more I don't want to be able to do that. I'm a problem solver, I'm a designer, I – I'm a – and for that they were willing to pay, I think, three pounds a week starting salary, and I – I thought that that was absolutely horrible. And I welcomed the opportunity to apply for the scholarship, for the **Fulbright**. And I did with full support of the principal of the school, a – a – a Scottish painter who was not my friends because as president of the student union, you can imagine we had many, many skirmishes. But he said, **America** is entering what we entered in the first Elizabethan age, culturally, and you must go there. And o-off I went and they threw in a summer scholarship at **Yale**, six weeks. And money was a problem, because sterling was not converted – not that I had any. But i-it – it created a problem, because most art schools are not boarding schools. So I had to live somewhere. So I lived at International House in **New York**, in the cheapest room in the basement, and developed techniques, how to eat for little or nothing. I was also helped by the fact that my mother had a couple of

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cousins where I was invited to dinner once a week and they'd give me sandwiches for the next couple of days. And then I'd buy a box of cereal and I'd buy a loaf of bread. And I couldn't afford the school cafeteria, but I could buy 20 cents worth of bologna or cheese, and that would stretch for a couple of meals with my loaf of bread. And as to – and – and a carton of milk, which I put on the windowsill to – to keep cool. A-And – and I discovered the American luxury, there's free sugar in the cafeteria, where you can help yourself, put a couple of packages in your – in your pocket and with my box of cereal I had breakfast every morning, and my carton of milk, you know. And it – it worked. And I started to freelance. There was a woman who did [indecipherable] greeting cards, and I did the finished drawings. Making the bells on the wedding cards nice and oval, the polka dots round. And listening to these – the radio programs of the day, like the trace of lost persons, the **FBI** and peace and war. I got a whole education. And I worked there some nights a week. And then the father of a schoolmate of mine from **Vienna** had a business of embroidering blouses, women's blouses. And he – he paid for these designs, lots of money. And he didn't want them finished, he wanted them on tracing paper so he could trace them onto the blouses. Now I employed my best friend to help me, we had so many to do. Unfortunately we discovered it late in the year, but we could actually afford to go to the movies, which we hadn't been able to do before. Was a sensational year at International House. We put on shows. And if I give you the

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cast, let me say that one of our fellow students was **Leontyne Price**. So we had the best show in town, and a bunch of Hawaiian friends which [**indecipherable**] sometimes still in touch, who were musicians. Was lovely.

Q: When did you come to the **United States**? What year was that?

A: '49, I believe, if I'm not mistaken. I can verify that, but I think that's right. For a year. And – and – and there is the story I – I once mentioned to you, which I think is very wor – well worth saying. My ow – my own attitude was I could not live in this country, because I'd just been through six years of war against discrimination and I was seeing the newspapers and what have you that din – din – discrimination in this country was rampant. I – I – I read the – the anti-Semitic diatribes of – of – on the hill, of [**indecipherable**] and – and Father **Coughlin**(ph) all this was not unfamiliar to me, but then the discrimination against black people seemed totally intolerable. And a couple of things happened. I arrived on the Queen **Mary** on my **Fulbright**, and there was a green uniformed customs official who looked at my papers and – and looked at my – my suitcase, my shipping trunk, whatever I had brought, and he said, how long do you propose to stay here? And I said, oh I don't know, I have a – a year's – I mean, a school year's scholarship, preceded by six weeks in **Yale**. And I might hitchhike around a bit to see some of the country. So, it'll be a year, or – or maybe 18 months at the most. And he said no. And I said, I – I beg your pardon? And this great big, red-haired Irishman, you see – I said, you mean I can't do that?



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And to my utter amazement he put his arm around my shoulder and he said, young man, this is the country to live. And we – we need young people to come here, and you don't want to go back after 18 months. And I was completely floored by this, because I had seen customs officials in – in **Austria**, in **Germany**, in **France**, in **Britain**, and never had anyone said a fre – a – a friendly word. It wasn't fashionable until that time. Now they say welcome to the country or something, but this is all the last few years, you know. To me, this was absolutely stunning. I've never forgotten it.

[break]

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape number two, side **A**, and you were telling me about coming to this country on what you thought was going to be a temporary excursion and your – your encounter with a customs officer.

A: Well, the – the s – the next thing that made a tremendous impression was in this six week course a-a-at **Yale**, which was for students 20-odd students from different countries all over the world who were coming to – to study for year, and this was sort of a conditioning, American studies, you know, so they would not get too much of a culture shock because university here was different from university in their own countries. And there were courses in – in politics and in English and in

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literature and so forth. And one of them was in sociology. The professor was a professor by the name of **Serge(ph) Yamaki(ph)**, a Finnish American, young man who was wonderful. I had never had a professor like that. He told it how it is, talked straight. He talked about religion in this country. He said there are statistics about how many people go to church. I assure you a percentage, or a large percentage of the – the majority of people going to church – to various churches, doesn't matter which, are going to show their Sunday clothes, or their automobiles, or whatever. It becomes a social thing. It has very little to do with religion. We had a course – oh, oh and he talked about discrimination and about what must have been the first seedlings of the Civil Rights movement. And he said, this is an uphill struggle, it'll take a while, but it's moving along. We are correcting. There are – there are serious attempts to correct the wrongs of the past. And he went into detail saying what people were doing and what was going on and so on. And you had not heard about that in **Europe**, you only heard about the negative stories. So I became aware that somebody was trying to do something. And that was – that – I'd perhaps been hasty when I said I could never live in a country where these things exist, as long as there were forces at work that were trying to counteract the – the – the bad things I had heard. Well then circumstances overtook me. I – I met my wife again, after we had known each other in **London**, in fact we had been double dating, but not a-as each other's partner. And she went to **America** when the Czech government in exile

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collapsed because of the Czech coup in **Prague**, the communist coup, and she was not going to go back to **Prague** under the communists. So, she had helped out the second world meeting of the International Monetary Fund which was in **London**, and sh-sh-she was o-on loan to them from the Czech government be – just before the coup. And they offered her a job in **America** and she said, I am very happy here, and when the Czech government collapsed, somebody remembered the – her job offer and he – he – he restated it and she accepted. So she came what she thought was for a year to work for the Monetary Fund in **Washington**, and she worked there for 36 years. And I came and – to the **United States** and one day – there was a Greek student in International House who said, I'm hitchhiking to **Washington**, anybody want to come? I said, I know somebody in **Washington**, let me try and get to a telephone. Well, I tried and – and they told me that the United Nations were in **Flushing Meadows, New York**, and I said yes, but a branch, and I got a Russian operator and forget it, I could not convince her that there was any United Nations here, which of course there was, the World Bank and Monetary Fund, and a couple of other one. I gave up. So did the Greek chap, by the way. Said, ah, I'm not going. So that was – I – I'd looked for telephone listings under her name, there was none. Anyway, I – I just gave up. I – a short while later she went on home leave, which was **London**, although she is from **Slovakia**. Ka – children's transport survivor. And my – our mutual friends gave her a book that had just come

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out, “**The Green Beret**” by **Hilary Saint George Saunders**. It was the first book about the commandos by a historian. And they said, bring that to **Peter**. And she said, where? He’s in **New York**. Really? I’m going through **New York**, I’ll bring it to him. She did and I said I tried to come and see you in **Washington**, told her the story. She said, you – you must come and see **Washington**. So I hitchhiked to **Washington**, which if you had a straight ride took seven and a half hours, before everything. Before – before the bridge, before the parkway, before the tunnel in **Baltimore**. And I then developed the habit of hitchhiking after school on Friday to **Washington** and we got engaged and in the spring of 1950 we were married. And I could now stay under – as the family member of a **U.N.** employee, and work. And I got job in **Washington** and I’ve been here ever since.

Q: In what ways was it significant to you that your wife was also a survivor?

A: It was like a homecoming. I had been engaged to a – a – an Irish Protestant girl who was as liberal as the day is long and as bright as can be, and that, however, did not include her family. Her father was a colonel and he was the – one of the leading heart specialists in – in **Ireland**. And he wer – had been a colonel at [indecipherable] the African – north African campaign. He was actually in on the concentration camp reparations in **Europe**. And you would have thought that that might impact him in some way, and it di – it certainly impacted him, but the – the notion of his daughter marrying a foreigner, a Jew, an artist, all bad. You see, so the

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– the mother was also a doctor, a research. The young woman herself, her father was a professor at **Queens in Belfast**. She went to **Trinity in Dublin**, which is, of course, Catholic. And so, we did a lot of commuting between **Dublin and Belfast** and I got s – deeply into the Irish problem, so similar to the Israeli problem, so similar to so many of the other discriminatory problems. And found th – intellectuals or not, there was no reasoning with the people. They believed every atrocity story. They told me the same atrocity stories north and south, with a change of characters. And – and the young people were generally against that. But they had a tremendous uphill struggle. Anyway, the mother, the researcher doctor said do not tell Dad that you are getting engaged, because it will kill him. In defense of this absurd attitude, let me tell you that my own family was not lagging far behind. And my mother's eagerness to get me on that graduate year to **America** was without a doubt largely motivated by – she was even willing to not be near me i-in order to save me from a fate worse than death in – in her – in her view. And – and so – so what – what can I say to you? It is a – an amazing thing. I have never found out what happened to this young woman, who was certainly completely innocent of – of anything that took place. And for awhile I was in – in agony to make a decision what I would do with my life before I decided to marry my wife, whom I admire tremendously as the child survivor of her entire family. The three children were the only survivors, everybody else was murdered. And so you do what you feel you

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must do. And I as – must say I – we’ve had an absolutely marvelous marriage. With the millennium it’ll be our golden wedding anniversary. And ma – the secret recipe is respect and admiration.

Q: I would like to ask you more about **England** after the war, and then we’ll go back to the **United States** in a moment. Did you experience any other anti-Semitism in **England** after the war?

A: Not really, not really. I would say we had a mixed bag of friends, some refugees, **Germany** and **Austria** and **Hungary** and so on. And quite a few British people.

You see, I’ve been several people in my life. I’ve been a student, so I had art student friends. I had – some of whom became very famous artists. I had been a – a – a soldier, not only with other foreigners, but with British colleagues. When I was in **London** just now, one of my friends from cadet school, who was a fellow commander with whom I’d actually done a night patrol in **Normandy**, without us realizing it until we told each other the stories, that we obviously were both on the same thing, in cadet school we were very close friends, and he is as English as they make them, and he came to see me up from **Essex**, where he now lives. And we said we’ll have lunch in a pub, and a drink. And he told me that it was his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. And I said how c – how could you leave your family on your 75<sup>th</sup> birthday? And he said, I told **Peggy** I – I w – I wanted to do this. And he said, you don’t realize it, but on my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday I happened to be visiting you in **Washington**. And on my 21<sup>st</sup>

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birthday we were both in **Normandy**. So I thought it appropriate. He also brought me a thing he had written about his **D-Day** experience. It is extremely moving. It was his father's birthday, **D-Day**. And when it was over, **D-Day** night, he said, I felt – I suddenly reflected that I was very grateful not to have spoiled my father's birthday by becoming a casualty. So, I – I – I think his **D-Day** account is brilliant. He writes as I wish I could, and he in turn, has read – read my book and he said to me – he wrote me a letter and he said, I've read your book, and you're not supposed to enjoy a book about such grim times and experiences. But you and I know that in between the grim times and experiences, we had some wonderful times. So forget what I said about – I really enjoyed your book, because it's like you were there, I mean, when you read it. And so is his. And he says, you know, **D-Day** wasn't so bad for us compared to what we experienced in the next few days afterwards, and that's true. But in describing his **D-Day**, he tells me where – you see, he was – he had a disadvantage over me. He was surrounded by all the people with whom he had trained. I was one of me attached to people I barely knew. A training mistake, they should have put me with them earlier. But, when they were killed, I didn't know them. When his buddies were killed, and one was like shot in half crossing a road in front of him, these were his friends. So it was much more personal for him, a-and I respect that, I mean I – I never saw one of my immediate friends killed or wounded. I saw a lot of people killed or wounded, but not my immediate friends.

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They were attached to the unit next door, as – a specialist as I was, to this. So it – it made a-an emotional difference that was to my advantage. I mean, I was shocked enough when I heard that two chaps down the road whom I knew very well had – had just been killed, you know, and so on. I don't see them. And I was **Tommy** gun guard for a burial party that buried, I don't know, 40 people. I didn't know any of them. So it – it – you know, these are all factors in this thing, it's a very, very personal the experiences.

Q: You were in **England** during the **Nuremberg** trials and during the **U.N.** vote on the partition of **Palestine**, and I would like you to talk about both of those events, starting first please with the –

A: Both of which? The **Nuremberg** trials –

Q: **Nuremberg** trials and then also the **U.N.** vote on the partition of **Palestine**.

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: First, if you would, please tell me about **Nuremberg**, and did you ever think about possibly going over and working as a translator or an interpreter?

A: No, no, I never had the opportunity, nobody asked me. It didn't happen. I followed it closely and – and relished the just punishments of some of the participants. I also was aware that many people were given immunity for – for reasons of practicality of – of **[indecipherable]** scientists who were needed and goodness knows what else. It did not involve me personally. I now welcome the



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notion that – that **Palestine** – that – that **Israel** came into existence, and I have mentioned to you before my Scottish principal with whom I used to skirmish in art school, and I remember that I was in his office when the assassination of Count **Bernadotte** came th-through – the news came through. And I said, I'm shocked about that, one should not kill United Nations officials. I-I think that's beyond the pale. And he said, to my utter amazement, these are the birth pains of a new nation, and you have to accept it, that this is the sort of thing, we don't know the details. And later of course, I heard that **Bernadotte** was targeted because he was assuming a stance of a very unfavorable [**indecipherable**] and so on and so on. But I was amazed that this Scotsman had the vision to s – way beyond mine, that this was a thing you had to take into your stride. Anti-Semitism, which is coming back to early Christian, didn't affect, but you have to bear in mind that all our chaps had cover stories and many of them found the [**indecipherable**] of that cover story was comfortable, and so they didn't say who they were. Many of them didn't practice any religion particularly, and when it came to intermarriage, all of us were independent enough to say if I want marry an Eskimo, I will. Metaphorically speaking, quite a few married Eskimos, which some of them came to regret. But that doesn't alter the fact that on principle, you felt, I'm my own person, I can do what I like. Now comes the question which is probably down your list somewhere, of – of h-how much did Judaism mean? It's very difficult. On the one hand, some of

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us had a reaction, saying I don't want to belong to anything that excludes somebody. That's a very broad statement, but – but i-it's meant to be. I don't want to belong to a Jewish club. That means only Jews can join, because that is the exclusion of somebody and that's what we were just fighting against. I don't want to belong to another club either, that include – excludes people. In fact, I don't want [indecipherable]. But it goes beyond that, because you say, if I send my children to Sunday school, or they belong to a club, I don't want to join any clubs. Clubs segregate. That's not always reasonable, but that's an emotional reaction to some of the things that have happened before. So you see, we did not send in our children to – to Sunday school. I had two daughters and a son. We had the son, the son was **Bar Mitzvahed**. The girls were not **Bat Mitzvahed** because we hadn't even heard of that in **Europe**. The son was **Bar Mitzvahed**. When he was born he did not have a bris, he was circumcised in the hospital. It's again the emotional reaction against belonging to something that excludes other people. It's quite absurd if you reflect upon it, and it's taken me years to – to – to overcome it. But – but it was a very real factor, possibly an error, socially, possibly an error religiously, because parallel to that are the war memories of going to shul with my grandfather, who was very, very serious about it, as my parents were not. And the tug of war between the sentiment an – of emotional tradition on the one hand, and the not wanting to belong to anything that excludes anybody else is an ongoing thing. Right now I'm deeply

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embroiled in a fight that I find myself in, rather surprisingly. It is that the members of my troop of – of foreign refugees, want to put up a memorial to the troop and the 20 who were killed in north **Wales** where we were trained. This is all initiated by my book, where it suddenly has sort of come to – come alive, and a retired judge who was one of us, refugee from **Germany**, has taken the ball and is running with it like crazy, and the people in north **Wales** think that the movie will be made in – in north **Wales**, which of course doesn't follow. But – so the local council and the council of **Wales** is all in favor and has given us a lovely little green plot overlooking the ocean in this resort town, where they are going to put up a memorial. And when they drafted the words, it said, refugees from Nazi oppression. It did not use the word Jewish. And I'm up in arms, and I say it has to include the word at least mostly Jewish. And in order to bring this about, I am fighting tooth and nail, I'm – I'm enlisting the support of my surviving colleagues or their widows. I sought an interview with the Honorable **Miriam Rothschild**, who was married to one of our chaps and is a wealthy ma – scientist in her 90's. And she said, you must come down and talk about it, and I just now I went to the **Rothschild** estate and we spent all day talking and she is solidly on my side. And the – the thing that's happening is that some of the chaps who have embraced their cover story, don't want to break that cover story. It is as if they thought that the **York** massacre, of which they have never heard, happened last year rather than hundreds of years

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ago, and that by assuming the – their identities as British citizens church of **England**, which is what our dog tags said, they are escaping any danger of anti-Semitism and they have forgotten who they really are. Or rather, they would like to forget. Not all of them. Some of the non-Jewish members of the troop, there is a – a – a fellow, he is now in his 80s, friend of mine, who – whose name is **Gizer(ph)**, he served under the name of **Gordon**. He is a grandson of **Walter Liebkecht(ph)**.

**Walter Liebkecht(ph)** was the buddy and companion of **Rosa Luxemburg**, if that means anything to you, early German communism. His father, the son of **Walter Liebkecht(ph)** – **Walter Liebkecht(ph)** was assassinated by forerunners of the Nazis in the 20s. There is a **Käthe Kollwitz** woodcut, a gorgeous woodcut of the – the body of **Walter Liebkecht(ph)** and mourners. She was very much involved in that, **Käthe Kollwitz**. Well, the grandson of **Walter Liebkecht(ph)**, not Jewish, said there is not a drop of Jewish club in – blood in me, but I respect, applaud and salute my Jewish comrades and their bravery and I am on your side that it should say mostly Jewish on the monument. Another one, **Ron Gilbert Goodman**, he served in undercover intelligence in **Germany** after his command of duty. He got an **MBE**, Member of the British Empire in – from – from the queen, and he said – he maintained his cover longer than anybody, because he had to. He was – he was catching Nazis, you see. Post-war Nazis. And he said – it was a bit embarrassing because he's – he's widowed, his girlfriend wanted to read the book and he thought

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well, that will break my cover as far as she's concerned. But while he – they were discussing it, she got it from **Amazon** dot com and read it and – and he said, the hell with the cover, I'm on your side. He remembers that he was forced to destroy his shul, by the Nazis. So you see, for the judge, it's probably very difficult to go to the Welsh council and say, on reflection, it ought to say mostly Jewish. And I don't know whether he's man enough to do it. But if he isn't, I'll withdraw my support. That's how that one is.

Q: I wanted to get clarification on your cover story and something that you told me in the course of the interview so far. When you were offered the possible job as a policeman in **Palestine** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – did the man who offered you that job know the truth, that your – your real identity?

A: I doubt it. I – I think – I mean, as a colonel, somebody might have said these peculiar chaps we are giving you here are German speakers. But I mean, the brigadier, Lord **Lovett**(ph) until he was wounded, had some very early members of the forerunner of the two who I think were Sudeten Germans. Now, well a – we didn't know them, they were killed at **Dieppe** on – in the raid. They might have been Sudeten German Jews. No idea. Didn't know them, I don't know their real names. But he was very fond of referring to all of us as good Germans, you see?

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Sudeten Germans. He didn't understand what that meant, really. Scottish highland chief, you know, head of the [indecipherable], the 17<sup>th</sup> Lord **Lovett**(ph). He – he doesn't understand what – who – who – who we are, although he subsequently apparently did. I just – in **Scotland** I talked to the widow of the brigade major, Lady **Hopagow**(ph) and she was full of – of – of – brimful of Holocaust stories and – and – and saying how – how supportive she was and so on. But, the Honorable **Miriam Rothschild** tells me that when she was in north **Wales**, first as the fiancée of one of our people, the landlady said she did not wish her to come again, because she didn't want a Jewish person in her house. And then she said two other things happened. One was that Lord **Rothschild** was in **MI-5** in British Intelligence, counter-Intelligence, and he told her that somebody had accused her in **Wales** to be probably a spy, and that they had actually searched her belongings. And she said, how could they? And sh – he – he actually cited examples of a crossword puzzle she had been working on, that **MI-5** knew had – had been extracted from her room. And when she – ou-our man, of course, was under his cover story, the one who was engaged to her, so he couldn't say anything in particular. And when they were married, they kicked him out too. So, for that reason she was against that memorial and I said to her, I'm much more confrontational than you are. If there was a manifestation as you describe, of anti-Semitism, the more reason to have a

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memorial there saying mostly Jewish, so that, you know, what's wrong with that?

And she agreed with me.

Q: And the gentleman who told you about the birth pains of a new nation, did he also know your true background?

A: The answer is, I don't know. I simply don't know. He was an autocrat and we – we – we fought quite a bit because of various school matters. And – but he respected me and I respected him in – in-in – in our stubbornness. And what he knew, I really don't know. I told you some of my fellow students became very famous. I tried to talk one of them out of his career because he wanted to be a scenic designer and I said, there's no future in that field. And he almost changed his major, but then he stayed a scenic designer. He is now one of the most famous ones in the world. He has, I think, a **CBE** from the queen and he is working. We couldn't meet because he was doing an amphitheater in the south of **France**. And he called me and we had a long chat. And then he is going to ho – **Peking**, and then he is going to **Hong Kong** and then he is going to **Kuala Lumpur** and in between he is doing “**Midsummer Night's Dream**” in **Copenhagen**. In – he was doing “**Nabucco**,” which is a Jewish **Verdi** opera, I mean, Jewish subject about **Nebuchadnezzar** and what have you, and the Jews in the south of **France**, in the hotbed of French neo-Nazism. And so he had, in an amphitheater, which makes it more difficult, he projected a Star of **David** over the amphitheater. And at first it

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was going to be during the famous **Nabucco** chorus of the – of the Jews. And then he said, in reflection, after reflection, I'd like to make a political statement. So I want it from the beginning of the overture, through the first act, the Star of **David** projected onto the entire amphitheater.

Q: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I have to change the tape. One moment. [break]

This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape number two, side **B**, and you were telling me about the scenic designer, but you have not mentioned his name.

A: His name is **Ralph Koltai**. He – he was material in the **Sydney** Opera House design, etcetera, etcetera. And he is – when – when I – when I relinquished my year as president of the student union, he was my vice president and followed me as president of the student union. He is from **Berlin**, Hungarian Jewish family. And I-I first noticed how famous he was when I saw a play in **Washington** where the program notes said that the scenic designer was a student of **Ralph Koltai's**. So that, I suppose means you have arrived. He is sending me a book, he had a big retrospective recently, and I am sending him my book, so we are exchanging – exchanging books. I'm very thrilled and he is very, very enthused about the fact that I wrote my book.

Q: I wanted to ask you to reflect upon what was going on in your head and what was going on around you during the conflict over the partition of **Palestine** and then



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ultimately the declaration of independence and statehood. For you, as a Jewish refugee, what was going on in your mind in **England** in those days?

A: Well, as I have really explained when I talked to you about my conversations with Mr. **Johnson** – I didn't mention his name either, **William Johnson** was the Scottish painter who was the principal of my school. He must be long dead. I – a-at first abhorred the violence, and it took me awhile to – to settle into the understanding that he had ahead of me. I – I could not at first fathom that oh, blowing up the King **David** hotel was a good thing to do, you see. Difficult. I – I-I respect his explanation that he gave, saying the birth pangs of a nation, you see. But, at first it was very difficult to grasp that the average – I mean, you have to bear in mind, you're a British soldier and you are assigned to this. Now, I have a friend who was in the Pioneer corps with me, his name is **Peter Bloch**(ph). He is from **Germany**, a refugee, Jewish refugee. He volunteered and he got into the 21<sup>st</sup> independent parachute company, which was – had some foreigners in it, British parachute company. He found himself in **Greece**, fighting civilians, political civilians and he hated it. It – it ma – pushed him wa – way over left politically and then he was assigned to **Palestine** with the six – with the first airborne division. And he said, I don't want to go. And they said, well, what do you mean? You are a war hero, you're – he said, I – I – I – you can call me what you will. I may have been a war hero in your eyes, but now I'm a conscientious objector. And I think he

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managed that, conscientious objection not to serve with the first airborne in – British first airborne in what was **Palestine**. And surely you can understand it. I can't understand that it threw him, but I can understand but I don't agree that it made him go way over to the left when he studied at the **[indecipherable]** school of economics and we used to have arguments about that. And I think he has settled down more or less as a liberal. But a – a – a – in – in his youth certainly the people he was hanging out with were – were a mixed bag of people who were reading the **“Daily Worker”** in the **London** underground demonstratively, and I remember hearing them complain saying I wish they'd give us a new one, I'm getting fed up holding this paper all the time. But it's done for demonstrative purposes, you see. The – well, the whole communism question, of course had s – got into the act in that when – when **Stalin** did some of the things he did, he became unacceptable, and the people who had been supportive of – of – of communism suddenly found themselves in a rather awkward position, because how do you backtrack when you've been such an enthusiast? And suddenly you're – you're – the people you have been following are committing atrocities that you cannot – cannot accept. So, I – I never – I never got into that communist game as so many young students did. I suppose it was a question of upbringing, because after losing World War I, for which many Jewish Austrians were great enthusiasts, they – they suddenly found that war is hell. Meaning the depression following it, meaning defeat, meaning the

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peculiar post-war – post World War I dealings, politically, where **Austria** was completely emaciated to a six million country from being a world empire. And peculiarly **Germany**, which was the much younger country, something like 2,000 years of **Austria** compared to 90 years of **Germany**. **Germany** was intact and more powerful than ever after – well, not economically, but – but territorially. So, you hear of Germans yearning for a return to power. You ga – you do – never hear of Austrians yearning for a return to power, because they were made up of so many minorities, that wanted to be torn apart. Which you see again in what used to be **Yugoslavia**. Every minority wants to be independent, whether they are viable or not. First independence, then maybe we'll confederate. I'll believe it when I see it. Terrible.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add about your years in postwar **England**?

A: My years in postwar **England** were primarily as a student. I had a – a wonderful time. I had – there was no **G.I.** bill, but there was a so-called further education and training grant, which was more modest than the **G.I.** bill, but it certainly sustained me together with my freelance activities. And I had my – my own apartment in southwest **London**, and I traveled mostly by bicycle, and by underground. And I had lots of friends Wartime friends, English friends, English friends from cadet school. I had some with whom I corresponded for years afterwards and the

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correspondence only ended because they died. I had a brilliant friend who wrote me **sheafs** of letters, all not about news, but about philosophical observations. I have kept them all. I – I find that – well, the Latin proverb, **Ubi bene ibi patria**. Where I'm well, there is my country, applies to some extent. I could live in **England** easily, but I could live anywhere unless the system of the country were such that I could not stomach it. I have a reluctance to visit countries in my travels where there is the juxtaposition of luxurious wealth and abject poverty, which has kept me away from **China**, from **India** and many other countries. I-It is perhaps a – a – a – an ostrich policy of simply not wanting to see it, but I find it distressing. I would say it includes **Mexico**. I've been to **Mexico** once to a Club Med and I don't think I'll go there again. I-It's not my thing. I – I don't know, I find that postwar **England**, I – I – I never really worked in **England**, other than on a farm as a boy, which did me a lot of good, and briefly on being released from internment – I did not go from internment into the army, I went from internment to being released, forgotten out momentarily, and then into the army, when I was old enough. I – I worked for a Polish publisher, and I was nothing. I mean, I was a gopher. And I have therefore, no work experience in **England** that could be called a work experience. The – the thing about the bacon and eggs picture turned me off rather solidly. Whether I would have gotten into my profession, I would imagine I would. I don't know how it would have worked. I'm – I can't, I really don't know. In this country there was a

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certain realization, that if you have any talents at all, there is someone somewhere to whom those talents are worth money, and they are willing to pay for it. They might be willing to pay as little as possible, but on the other hand, if you are reasonably alert and if you are willing to go where it's at – which is something that almost no other country seems to have. I mean, I can't picture people doing what people in this country have been doing for a couple of generations, that is the economic situation in our town is bad, so we put everybody in the car and drive to a state where I understand you can get a job. People go – actually do that. They don't do it elsewhere. And most of all, I realize that in this country, if something bothers you and you are willing to spend some time trying to remedy it – it needn't be a very political thing, it can be the bumps on the street, or – or the speed limit, or whether your school needs an addition. You don't have to – to – to give up your job to – to pursue this. You work on in a little bit and then get together with a few people who are like-minded. And in your own lifetime – even in – within the next few years, something actually starts to happen. Sometimes too fast. I come back to the bumps where they – they want the bumps in, then now they want the bumps out. And when they're out they will want them in again. You know, I mean, and – and – and that actually happens, at great expense and with a big effort. But you try and do that in some other country, and you know what's gonna happen? Nothing is gonna happen. Maybe it's changing a little, slowly now, and there are things happening here and

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there. But by and large, you run your head up against a wall, and the wall, the base of the wall is littered with the bleached bones of people who have tried before you, and some of them were good people, but they failed. Well, that's a big discouragement to run your head against the wall. I have participated in some of these things in this country. Got an addition built at the elementary school where my children went, which actually came into use while the youngest one was still there. You know, I mean, unheard of in – in – in other countries. Doesn't – doesn't happen, doesn't happen. So I find it enormously refreshing, and you can take some of the other things in your stride a little bit if you know that on the other hand, this exists.

Q: Let's go back to the 1950s and now you are living in the **United States**. I would like to get a sense of what was happening in your life, now you're newly married and you are now in the **Washington, D.C.** area. What was happening to you professionally and personally in the 1950s?

A: I first g – my – my wife arranged that I should see a man who was himself a n – a German refugee, and he re – had a small public relations agency, that was a new profession. And he would steer me to where I might get a job as a graphic designer. Well, I went to see him, and he decided to employ me. In some – in many respects that was a disaster. It was a very small firm, of more heads than employees. And the attitude was rather peculiar. I was now the art director and the art department all in

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one, and we didn't have many jobs to do. Through family connections he got an assignment where I – where there were to be free full page, full color ads in “Esquire” magazine. I had never done anything like it, and neither had anybody else there. So it was my assignment. I not only designed them, I wrote them, I supervised the photography, I went into unbelievable acrobatics. And they came out, for those times, pretty well. One of the partners suggested that I be given a bonus, because I think I earned 30 dollars a week. The big boss said, he is an artist and he had the fun of doing it, it's a bad idea to give him a bonus. And they didn't. This kind of attitude made it a little difficult. I-It was in everything. I mean, if we did get money for this, there's no doubt we did, he would buy a new oriental rug for the office. And I designed a shiny brass nameplate for downstairs on [indecipherable] street where we were – had a – had a upstairs office with a three-dimensional logo which I had designed in the – custom made in brass. I mean, we were really going for it, and everybody had their own hand-engraved business card, and – which we really couldn't afford, you know? And – and the – well, we went to a meeting for – with – with some corporate association, and I discovered the thing I mentioned elsewhere in – in other connections, and that is that nobody was saying anything, and we were to sell these people on why we wanted to do this. So I spoke up and I said, here's what we need to do. We actually did a brochure for them. That was unprecedented, and – and i-it wouldn't have happened if I hadn't sold them on

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the concept, because it was way out modern for them at that time, you know. Well, ultimately everybody quit, and I was the sole employee. The boss took a job with the government and said, don't ever call me there unless there's an utter emergency. And then he said, I see here an advertisement that the Pentagon is – wants to retain an agent, an advertising agency for the army. So why don't you go and bid on that. Me. And I said, you know, tha-that's a bit absurd, because they are looking for a big corporation to handle this. Never mind, you do as you're told. I went to the Pentagon and to this room full of colonels and what have you and advertising agencies from all over the country. And the colonel who made the opening speech said any firm whose business would be doubled by this account is disqualified. Obviously it didn't want small time people. I knew my boss so I stayed til the end of the talk and I came back and I said, we are disqualified because of this stipulation. And he said why? And I said, because if your business is doubled. He said, well, it would do much more than double our business, so we are all right. And he was absolutely ser-serious, you see. So I – I – he filled out the forms, I filled out the forms and he sent them in. I was still the only employee. After awhile there was – the door rang one day – doorbell rang and it was a team to evaluate our facilities. That was rather difficult for me, but I had been trained to improvise, and I said several people are on assignment with [indecipherable] and several people are on vacation, and right at this moment I am the only person here just for this next hour



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or so. Would you rather come back another time, or what? And they said, perhaps we should. And there were lots of empty desks and the place was very elegant, with the oriental rug and all the other stuff. And they left, and I called the boss at work in government. I told you never to call me. I said, well, I think this is an emergency. These guys might come back any time, I – they – they don't – I tried to pin them down, but they said they come for random inspection. And he said, I'm coming over. And he came and he said, you know, in – we – we have to do something. And he said, I just crossed **Lafayette** Park. We could take some of the bums from the benches, and some of them are your size and some of them are mine, and could dress them up and sh – have them – give them a shave and they could be sitting at the desks when these pe – if – if only we knew when they are coming again. I – I said, you know, I – I don't think that that'll work. He was deadly serious. Well, a short while later, he had the account of an African nation, and who was doing it? I. We had a newsletter. I had absolutely no material for the newsletter, but I went to the ambassador and interviewed him, and I went to look at the postage stamps of the country, and there – there were some animals that were indigenous only to that country, so I went to the zoo and talked to the director about whether he had any of these specimen, and he did, and I had a photographer and I took pictures in the zoo, and pictures of the stamps and I got a congratulatory letter from a philatelist at the **Smithsonian** saying I wish more people were doing this. He didn't know I was

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doing it out of desperation, you see. And then the boss was invited for the inauguration of the president in that country, and he went, and was decorated. And I said, be sure to keep me informed so I can write the newsletter that should get to the guests before they go – all go home. And he said he would, and he sent me nothing. And I was getting progressively more desperate because I felt duty-bound to do this and I called his wife. And I said, is he writing to you? And she said yes. I said, can I see the letters? She said no, they are rather private. I said, cross out the private things and – and I – I have to have something of what's going on. Didn't get anything. I finally took – fished out accounts of the first inauguration. This was a re-inauguration of a second term president, and I wrote as if somebody had been there, and if it described the – the women's dresses in general terms, I described the women's dresses in general terms. And I – I – I just winged the whole thing and – and showed pictures of the previous inauguration. And I had it all just about done, with each story on one desk and now all I had to do is assemble it, and he came back and he said, the place is in an awful mess. And I said mess? The mess is each desk, since nobody sits at the desks, it's one story. It's perfectly organized, I – it's the only way I can get this thing out in time. And he said, first we're going to get the place shipshape. I said, you touch one of these stories, I – I'm out of here. He touched the stories, and I quit. And then he wanted to pay me to come back to put out the issue, and so I – but I mean, for the swan song, but I wa – you know, there

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was simply no way. So I called all the people who had quit before, half a dozen and one of them was working for channel nine television. And he said, how would you like to be a television art director? I said, well there's one catch, I know nothing about television. He said, neither does anybody else, it's new. Why don't you come on out, I can't promise anything, but we'll see. I went out and I was television art director, and it was lots of fun. Pioneers, you know. Never before. Live television. We did fantastic things. We had more courage than good sense. We – we – we did spectacular things, we got – and being **Washington** we did network things, and I-I did presidential broadcasts for several presidents, some at the White House, some in the studio. I – then – then **CBS** did a survey and discovered that the country was read for country music. I think the survey meant **Simon** and **Garfunkel**, but they didn't understand that, and so we got **Jimmy Dean**. And we did the **Jimmy Dean** show, network, and I had a ball. I had a free hand to do what I like. I did a network musical every week. It meant not sleeping for one night, working clean acro – around the clock. And for couple of adjacent night, if we got home by two or three in the morning, we were doing well. And I decided I had to make a move financially, so I went to the management, which was as autocratic as they come, and I said, you are not charging enough for my services. That was the approach. And they said, how much should we be charging? I said, well first of all, I'd like to have a percentage, like all the other talent is getting. Oh really, how much do you have in

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mind? So I – my wife and I had a long session over the weekend, because if I said the right amount, they would cut it in half. If I said too much they would laugh and fire me. If I said not enough, they would accept it. So I had to say too much, but just enough too much that by cutting it back it would be reasonable. And that actually worked. And it was based on the premise that the role of **Washington** television would increase. I was much more optimistic than they were, and I was right. The trouble was when I didn't get any sleep any more, I couldn't – didn't have time to bill, so that my bills were accumulations of several weeks. And that meant the check was large, and that meant the person who had to sign the check was signing a check that was bigger than his. It wasn't really bigger than his, but it was by the fact that it was several weeks. And that irked them. So after a period of time, they said, we are going to terminate this agreement. And I said, and what? And they said, we'll – we'll see that you are all right. Well, seeing that was – I was all right was a ludicrous joke compared to what I'd been earning. So I said, I don't know whether that is acceptable. So they said, do you want to see the president, whom we could never see. I met him in the elevator and usually told him what – what – what I – what I needed and he would support me, because I was an asset. This time they were waiting. You want to see the president? Sure. I walked in and he was – you know, it was the days of having no desk and a long settee and he was sitting on the armrest with his feet up on the settee and said, sit down. I was sitting 12 foot away

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on the long settee. And he said, can we help you to relocate? And I said, I – I think I'll manage. And in the meantime they offered my assistant, who was Afro-American, my job at half the salary. And he quit and we formed a partnership, and we freelanced for – after 10 years, for channel nine, really doing, if I say so myself, an excellent bloody job. We were way ahead of people, right to the right and left. Some of them even called us and said, you are giving us a hard time, you are doing such fascinating things that our management is constantly on us. We freelanced for another five years, as you know, a design partnership. Now, we did work for the other networks. We did the [indecipherable] orbital launch for **ABC**, we did the inaugural coverage for **ABC**. We are – we had been **CBS**. They had – they deliberately prevented us from doing freelance for a few years, out of sheer malice. Ultimately we got into a difficult situation because my partner – we were doing a – a fashion show at the **Mayflower** with **Lyndon Johnson's** daughters. And we were building a – a – a walkway and sets and this was in **Herndon, Virginia** and I'd worked there all day and I was getting very tired, and I said, can you come out and finish up, and he said sure. And as he walked into the shop where we were building things, a guy hit a knot on a four by four [indecipherable] his lathe, and a piece flew off like a shell and hit him – hit my partner over the head and he had a fractured skull. And he didn't want to be hospitalized in **Virginia** in those days. So he got on the phone and arranged for his ambulance and hospitalization in the

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district where his sister was a nurse for a neurosurgeon. And he said, I – I have a fractured skull, can you come and get me? It's near **Dulles** airport, th-they took an hour before he was in that hospital. And they put in a metal plate and – and I found him a lawyer, and he got enough insurance compensation to buy a couple houses on **Capitol Hill**. And talking about anti-Semitism, or anti-black or anti anything, my art director colleagues in **Washington** would sometimes take me aside and say, we respect what a courageous thing you are doing. And I said, what am I doing? And they said, you have a black partner. And I said, it's not because I'm courageous, we work well together. And they would say yes, but it can't be easy. I say, it's no problem at all, we have – we have always worked together where we could work on one piece of rush work where I start on the right and he starts on the left and we meet in the middle and it looks like one piece. What more could you want? See? So that was still even in the creative arts a – a – a fact that people respected me for doing this. And reversely, I advertised for an assistant and one of my friends and colleagues called up and said, we lost one big account, so we have to lay off a couple of designers. We highly recommend so and so. He is Jewish, but he's a very nice guy. But he is a very nice guy. I hired him, but that still went on, you see, and that's in the liberal arts. So maybe that's why my friends in **England** want to duck out from the words on the monument.

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Q: We're almost at the end of this tape, so let me ask you the name of the company that you initially work for, where you were the only employee.

A: Well, it doesn't exist any more, although the boss still is there, and – and I'm not eager to give you the name, because I've said some nasty things about him.

Q: Can you give me the name of the partner that you had who was injured?

A: Oh, of the partner? Yes. **Joseph Waverly Swanson**. A great designer. He died.

**[break]**

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Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. Today is September 25<sup>th</sup>, we are continuing from an interview that was begun on August 7<sup>th</sup> of 1998, this is now September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1998. This is tape three, side **A**. Okay, can you hear me now Mr. **Masters**?

A: Yeah.

Q: You had been telling me about five years of freelance work after 10 years working with **CBS**.

A: This **Washington CBS** station, which was, at one time, owned and operated by “**The Washington Post**,” but it was also **Washington’s CBS** station and we did originate it, **Washington** being **Washington**, presidential broadcasts and so forth. And I did [**indecipherable**] I did some at the White House with President **Eisenhower**, subsequently with President **Kennedy**. We did a great big show at the – at the **Sheraton** Park Hotel, which was called, Dinner with the President, seven cameras, prime time, with **Kennedy** in attendance and **Johnson** in attendance, and a cast of stars. **Josh White**, **Hanya Holm** ballet, the **CBS** symphony orchestra. **Robert Preston** was the **MC**, the movie actor who did, you know, “**76 Trombones**,” etcetera. And **Josh** – I said **Josh White**, the folk singer. The **Clancy** brothers. These were big names at the time, and **Judy Collins** and –



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and I did a lot of id – scenery and had to build a stage because they didn't have one. And had to build dressing rooms downstairs. And that was quite – quite an exciting project, I enjoyed it thoroughly. I remember President **Kennedy** sitting there at the table facing the stage when his alarm went off. His – his wristwatch alarm to tell him that he had to – only so much more time to – to stay. And he made some joke about it, he was very quick with things like that. He was very funny. Very, very nice event, very warm hearted. I remember they had written things especially for him. There's an old American song called, "**We Want No Irish Here,**" which was, you know, prejudice against the Irish immigrants. And they sang that facetiously, and lots of fun. Well done, great success. So I – I af – you want to know what happened afterwards in – after my television years, I freelanced for the other networks. I did the six orbital flight for **ABC**. There was some scenery and some background material. I did inauguration of **Kennedy** for **ABC**, when it snowed so hard, we had great problems because it was almost impossible to get to the capital. On the way the truck broke down, and we had to get this show on the air. So we – we had a little pickup truck with – with – to – to build the booth at the stand facing the inauguration platform. And we called the American Automobile Association to help us, and they said, we can't help anyone who is not blocking traffic on the – on the parade route – on the route. So we said, thank you very much. And there were three of us in that pickup truck, my

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construction man and his assistant and I. And we pushed the truck to where it was blocking traffic in the inauguration route because we – we obviously had to get there. And without making another phone call, a roving AAA service truck got us started and we – in – in the snow, and we made it to the capital. The next near disaster was that the moisture of the snow that was melting on top of the flimsily constructed booth was leaking into the booth and short circuiting the cameras. And – and w – I mean, we an – we knew we would short circuit the cameras. Well, I – when you're a television art director, one thing you know how to do is where to get help quickly and who is reliable to come through and so on. I mean it – this was in the days of live television, i-it might be the sort of thing where somebody wanted to have a sailboat in the studio in the two hours and you would find one and get one into the studio in two hours. I once had a taxi pick up a chestnut man, you know, who – in the street, with his little oven, roasting – there was only one in **Washington**, in **New York** they used to be on every corner in the winter. And I knew where he was and we needed him for a live show, and I had a taxi pull up next to him and offer him, I think 10 bucks if he came. And h-he did, and they loaded his whole paraphernalia, the hot stove and we had him in the studio, you know. That's how we used to do things. Well, I knew a – a construction – a – a roofing person in – in – in – in **Virginia**, and I got him out in the snow to get – fight his way through to the capital to lay that stuff on top of the booth to keep the

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water out. And in those days we were not pooled but this – we – I was doing **ABC**, and the people I had – used to work with was ceeb – from **CBS** were next door in the next booth. And I went over to a man with whom I'd had many skirmishes because I felt that the – the – what shall I say, the – the good of the country preceded our little professional skirmishes. And I said to him, **Bill**, your cameras are going to short out. And he said, oh my God, I'm sure you're right. What can I do? And I said, I have an – I happen to have a roofing guy come who is laying insulation on top of my booth, I'll have him lay some on top of your booth if you're willing to pay him for what he is doing. He's – he won't charge you much. And he was so grateful, you know, and I'm sure that that kept him – kept **CBS** on the air for the coverage of the **Kennedy** inauguration. When it was over somebody stole all the furniture, even though to get to the booth, you had to get up a ladder. You know, it was a – a rather improvised arrangement, a – a plywood nailed together to make a platform and so on. And somehow they managed to unload that furniture during the night following the inauguration. And wasn't much furniture, but it was a desk and whatever, you know, for the newscasters a chair and a rug, and it was gone. Those were the exciting days of live television, I don't think it quite goes on that way now. Was really wonderful. After that I did some shows for the **United States** Information Agency, **ITV**, and my assistant – my – my partner and I did a number of shows for them which were seen all over the world, they had

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an English learning thing that we went international and was probably seen by more people than any television show ever seen – as a series. And we tried to give them – when we came they looked rather amateurish and – and we were retained to do a – a few – a couple of seasons, I believe, of their – all their shows, internationally seen. And we tried to make them look like network television, and I think we did. Politically – when I say politically, I mean professional politically, it was rough going. Very, very difficult to deal, because – to deal with these people, because television and – and – and government don't mix easily. The bureaucracy is too – too slow, too complex, and too – frequently too few – too unreasonable to do things that – that need simple and quick solutions and – and we – we managed it as best we could, but it was not altogether a happy – a happy situation. They would say, for instance, we have – we need to hire additional help, and we haven't got the government slots, so why don't you hire them under contract? And that's not altogether proper, but again, it – absolutely necessary at times, you – you – you can't get – if you can't get the work done, you can't get on the air, and if you – a deadline is a deadline and so forth. And so – then you have to make, as an outsider, decisions whether you want to do this if – if it – if you can see its urgency. And then, very frequently, you don't get the backup it requires to continue doing it. Like they would say, we have a person we – whom we want you to hire and you hire that person and recognize that this is a big mistake, but you're

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stuck in an in-between situation. I-It's not – it's not altogether a – you – you really have to walk a tightrope of – of constant difficult professional ethical decisions how you handle this, recognizing that the need on the one hand, downright patriotic need in – in the case of – I mean, they – they say they're not – they're not a ministry of propaganda and I – I – I'll accept that, but naturally they are trying to tell the world about what **America** is doing, and to give people news that would otherwise not have an unbiased news report of any international event. So, the responsibility weighs heavily on you, and you try and do the best you can, and while you are doing it, you are being hampered by all kinds of nonsense. So that, as I say, is not altogether easy. After a period of time, I had – when was it? Yes, I worked f – I was then asked by the office of economic opportunity to work on the war on poverty, President's **Johnson's** war on poverty. And I became its first art director. Now, for – for Sargent **Shriver**, President **Kennedy's** brother-in-law, and we have been friends ever since. And that was a-again, a very fascinating experience, because pa – the war on poverty was a – a thing that if you were involved in it, you were enthused to the point of – of personal dedication. I see images of that time where 20 or more people – 20 of us would get a mailing ready, and it didn't matter what rank you were, there were the top officials and – and the bottom officials in tennis shoes, running around tables, stuffing envelopes to get the thing out that had to be out the next day. And from my point of view, I

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designed the image of the whole thing, the – the – the logos, the emblems, the visual impact which was necessary because we had to do everything we could to muster the enthusiasm of a – a – a nation that was not always enthusiastic about the specific things we were trying to do. If you tried to open a job corps camp somewhere where you were training underprivileged youngsters, these were teenagers and – and people were afraid of them. They were racial – there were racist prejudices, where they said we don't want that next to our town, you know, and th-the – the kind of thing we had to try and overcome. I remember incidents where in some job corps camp young men stole a car and drove it into a station wagon with a family and several members of that family were killed. And the next day there was an outcry and the persec – across the country saying this program is no good. Well, it – nothing to do with the quality of the program and he would have stolen the car if he had not been in the job corps presumably, and no reason to assume otherwise. Bu – and to – to – to then crucify the program because s-somebody had deviated what was the kind of thing that we were at times up against. There were a – a story possibly apic – apocryphal that went around, that the mayor of a town who didn't want to have a job corps camp next to him said, these are going to be the – the – the – I – I have se – now the camp had already opened and he was trying to get it closed down. And the mayor said, th-the – it – it's predominantly blacks in this program, and the official from the war on poverty

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office of economic opportunity said, as a matter of fact, it's 50 percent white. It – it's no – as a matter of fact, it's only 50 percent black. And the mayor responded, well, you see, if it were 50 percent white, that would make it all right. Which, as I say, possibly apocryphally illustrates y – the absurdity of the prejudice. The – then there was this – a s – a sudden solution for some of our problems because some brilliant mind, probably **Sargent Shriver** invented **Head Start**. **Head Start** being a preschool program when children are perceived to be cute and – and little, and not a threat. And yet, in and of itself a most useful thing because the learning process should start pre school, as I think we have all come to realize. And that was started with a tea at the White House. It was inaugurated and announced, and – and I designed its – its – its logo and so on of a couple of building blocks, symbolically. Lady **Bird Johnson** officiated at this opening, of which I had like two days notice, and it's still in existence now. And I just had a letter from **Sarge Shriver** about it, because I wrote a short article about how we – we – the obstacle course of getting that logo in to the White House tea in – with – with no advance notice. And it was not without problems, because one of the things the legislation had said was, the maximum feasible participation of the poor. And it was not easy to get – to recruit poor people who understood the state of the art methodology of dealing with pre-school children, because many of them had themselves been treated very casually, or neglected in their own preschool period or – and later.

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And to then put them into a responsible positions to do it in such a way as not to damage the preschool children was – was not – well, it was quite a problem. Still, much good was done over a difficult course. I worked for them for – for 10 years. It started in a real f – peculiar way. I mean, they had asked me to – to help, and I came as a volunteer, and then they wanted more help, and more help. And I said, listen, you guys, I can't spend all my time here, I have to make a living. And they said, do you want to do it as an outside person, or as a staff person? Well, having had the experience with **USA** television, where as an outside person I found it terribly hard, I said staff. And they said, well, what would it take to hire you? And I s – mind you, I had really believed when I was first asked to do pro bono contributions that a-all the people working for this program were volunteers and it turned out that all of them were staff and I was a volunteer. So I became a staff person. And I remember in the beginning of my being a staff person, which meant somebody gave me a desk and a telephone, you know, and everything else was improvisation in the beginning, there was a writer who shared my office, as did indeed, five writers. But this particular one told me of his hardship that he was doing this as volunteer work and he hoped to get a job eventually, and that his children were hungry and neighbors were looking after them and so forth. And I said, you have to – you know, they are all so busy with what they are doing, they are not thinking of you and me. And I had to go and say, look, fish or cut bait.



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Either you – or I can't come as much as you want me to come and work. And then they gave me a job. And he said, darn it, I'm gonna do it. And he walked down to personnel and never came back. He had told them to hire him more or not and they said not. So e-e – these were rough days. I mean, you never knew what was going to – what was going to happen next. And – and we moved from place to place into improvised offices. And at the – at the times **Shriver** had two jobs, Peace Corps and poverty program and so on. But we did an enormous amount of good, I am quite convinced that some of the – the enthusiasm that was mustered, of you – you've never seen government offices like that where people are really – I mean, they would work into the night and through the night for nothing, to get things out, get things done. It was a marvelous experience. Of course, there came the time 10 years later when the administration changed and the new one decided that there was no more poverty in the **United States**, along with many other myth, you know, I mean the – the perception that poverty is priv – predominantly Afro-American is quite false. It is by no means that. It is, percentage-wise there are poor – poor whites in – in – in **Appalachia** and – and not only in **Appalachia**. Because of the migration to the cities to find jobs for the – from – from the rural communities, and then the disillusionment when there aren't enough jobs, and living in city slums and so on, this is a syndrome that is true across the country. It is probably better now than it has been, which doesn't mean its – it – it – it's good.

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But the awareness was, I think initiated – well, I don't want – I – I wanted to say by – by this program and – and it's not quite true, because of course, **Roosevelt** before has done – had done tremendous work. But that had begun to perhaps dissipate a bit, until it was revived by – by **Johnson**, who – who knew what it was like to be poor.

Q: Can I ask you to give me a time frame? When – what years –

A: Yeah, well, let's see, time frame. I worked for the Office of Economic Opportunity from October '64 to August '74, 10 years roughly. And then when – when there was supposedly no more poverty, we were dispersed and I was sent to the General Services Administration, which many perceived to be a fate worse than death. But by that time, having been in government for 10 years, I had inevitably become involved in some other battles, which is to make the government look better, which I think is terribly important. The government – you know, we – we tend to be cynical about what the government does, and the government does some things extremely well. Extremely well. And hides its – its light under a bushel, where – where you don't – you don't see what – how well they are doing certain things. I was al – I-I'm not saying this is true of – of every aspect, but it's true of many of their functions. I remember when a – a thing was introduced in the general service administration, where – to help citizens with questions about government, which if you've ever tried it by yourself, can be very,

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very difficult. You call up and they say that's not in my job description, or the – you – you – it's not – doesn't belong here and it belongs over there and then you – you have a sheet of paper in front of you full of telephone numbers going down as you're being referred from one place to the other. Well, we in the General Service Administration at that time set out to – to – to end this kind of irritating obstacle course. And we had a – an – an office specializing in giving you the right answer and steering you the right way. And I was skeptical that this would work. So I called them up. They couldn't tell that I was calling from the same building, you know, and I asked – I – I got a young Afro-American woman on the phone, and I asked her a question which I knew she could not possibly know the answer, it was a complex question that required some research. And sh – she said, I'm sorry, I can't answer this right away. I will call you in half an hour with the answer. And I said, thank you very much, and I so – said to myself, yeah sure. In about 27 minutes she called me up with the right answer. Now, I was absolutely bowled over, because it – believe me, it was a difficult, tough question that she had to research and she did it with no complaints, no fuss. I was very impressed. Tha – tha – I hesitate to say that I believe the program no longer exists, and I wonder how easy it is now to get information. But it was a move in the right direction. When I say I'm not sure it exists, I learned another big lesson i-i-in – in – in government, and that is, I thought, when we had real progress, like by the poverty

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program, visible progress, or with an invention such as this answering of citizen's problems, you know, that there was no going back, that you could not – that no future administration would be foolish enough to go back to where, you know, it would continue to move forward. That's not true. They are not only going back at – to the – to the – to square one, they go to 50 years before square one, and there's some common syndromes that I came to observe. For instance, a person from – appointed politically, either party, doesn't make any difference, to some office and heads maybe a department, maybe a division. Even smaller sub-units. You get the impression that the first thing they want to do is to write a letter home to mom to say I'm not at the feet of the president, I have his ear. And whether they want to invent a new identity for this particular department, division, whatever, regardless that it's part of a bigger thing, the government, or if you want to go one step down, of – of – of one of the agencies of the government, it doesn't matter, they want their own identity. So they – for – I'm – I'm speaking as a visual person. So all of a sudden you have all these things spring up, and their taste generally runs to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and not the 20<sup>th</sup> because they haven't heard of what things look like in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But I'm – when I'm speaking visually, believe me that's symbolic of everything else, they – they tend to hark back to something they have heard of how things are, where, and they want to imitate, and since they are not necessarily chosen for being innovators, they tend to retard the progress – the progress

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and go back to, before it was when it was already outmoded. Well, that's how it is. So one has to be constantly alert, to keep things going forward. And people get really doing that at times. So – and I'm not even mentioning politics, I'm mentioning simply the bureaucratic process, which is unavoidable to – s-so it would seem, because innovators who are capable of not that common a specimen. Well, after many a fight, some of which I've won, I did – for instance, I designed the building signs in the federal triangle that you still see where the newscasters stand in front of the thing that says Department of Justice, or **U.S.** Department of Agriculture, whatever. They are these vertical standing brownish colored things with very clear lettering, with a little bulge forward so you can read the title. And they are made of reinforced fiberglass. And I had to get those accepted by the fine arts commission. They were supposedly supposed to be a pilot program for all of **Washington** and then the whole country. The federal triangle being the experimental area. When I – when I presented it to the fine arts commission, they said, how long are these signs good for? And I said – I was about to say, oh, state of the art, they last long time, when **Carter Brown**, who was the chairman of the fine arts commission anticipated that and said, what we are afraid of is that they will last too long, because after 10 years our tastes will have changed and we'll get tired of looking at them, and they won't give us any money to do new ones if they're still good. So I said, they will last exactly 10 years. And two things

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happened. One, they are still there after, I think, what is it? 25 years. And they are getting shabby, and still they are not replacing them. And secondly, it never happened that they were – that they were done all over th-the – the town, or all over the country. A few were done by the initiative of some agencies here and there, but never beyond that. I-It just – not because they didn't like them, not because they weren't good, they just didn't get around to it, to it – it doesn't follow if something is efficient and works that this plan – that this plan will be permitted.

Q: Excuse me, we have to pause so I can – we have to pause so I can change the tape. **[break]**. This is a continuation of a . This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape three, side **B**, and you were telling me about your professional career and I believe you left me around 1974.

A: Yes. The – when – '74 – I'd gone slightly beyond that – was when the Office of Economic Opportunity ceased to exist and I was transferred to the General Service Administration and I had said that I had, by now, become a fighter for making the government look better to the s – to the citizen. And to try and introduce some, at least semblance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century while it lasted, to the general population. Whereas everything tended to be done backwards, visually, I mean, a government department. When I did the signs in the federal triangle, I had

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to find a sign that would be compatible with the earlier tendency to make a government office look like a Greek temple, because why? A Greek temple is – is old and solid, and the government, like banks, built like Greek temples, as we used to do, were deemed to be more solid if they looked like a Greek temple. Well then came the – the craving for modernity, and we got the kind of new deal architecture of an empty – beginnings of the influences of **Bauhaus** in – in – in style. And that in turn led to a degree of **Bauhaus** fatigue. That you didn't want plain boxes that were functional. The idea of – of the **Bauhaus** being that if it's functional and – and – and simple, and i-i – and efficient, it is beautiful, and it does not require decoration. And I was brought up with that in art school, that simple, if it's functional, it's beautiful, okay? Now look what's happened since. We – because of the – what I call the **Bauhaus** fatigue, we started with arbitrary and often ugly decora – over decoration. We had put flying buttresses onto buildings as a sort of harking back to when we were building thi – Greek temples. And in post-modern you see arbitrary archways that lead nowhere, attached to buildings as – as decoration. And – a-and th-the answer, if any – no – I – I – I'm not suggesting there is an answer, the answer is that no matter what we have, the only constant thing is – is change. We are going to go to something else, because you want something else, and it doesn't mean that it is necessarily better than its predecessor. That would be nice, and – but again, like I was saying about – a-

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about progress in government, I – you mustn't accept the notion that because the ultimate has been achieved, that it will therefore stay in – in – even in its – in its degree of quality. This is true in the arts. It – one could make one heck of an argument of saying that beyond **Beethoven**, you know, maybe we should have stopped there. Well, that's not fair, because look at some of the great things that have come to us since then. Whether they are better than the classic, the role models, is – is arguable. Another thing is that – that today's art modern is tomorrow's classic. We had been talking before about the **Beatles**, **Elvis Presley**, and some of us were shocked when they came on the scene. And some of us now look upon these manifestations as classical, compared to hard rock, compared to where we are now. We are nostalgic for the **Beatles** and for **Elvis Presley**. You see? And it's amazing how you can apply this formula to all kinds of completely different things, as I have just done, and I can go beyond that, it is in – in the ci – Civil Rights Movement, which I embraced with great enthusiasm, having just been through six years of war to f – to fight against racism. And I would have arguments with people on all sides. I'd have arguments with some of my Afro-American friends who would say ha – I had an Afro-American partner with whom I had va – hardly any arguments, we were on the same wavelengths. But with some of them who said that the persecution of Afro-Americans was as bad as the Holocaust, and I would say th ho – ho – hold it, hold it right there.



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[**indecipherable**] I will agree with one thing, that if – if you are running away from a lynch mob, it probably doesn't make any difference whether you're running from the Holocaust or from the lynch mob. But, apart from that, the notion that there is a federal program for your extermination and murder is different than even the collusion and permissiveness of a government that allows lynch mobs. That – this is not an advocacy of lynch mobs, obviously, but – but the point is, the idea that it was legislated to murder everybody. Men, women, children, old people, whatever, is unique. And therefore, the comparison does not hold, okay? I remember that when I was in t – in television, and my Afro-American assistant, who later became my partner when we both quit, wa – there was one sort of greasy spoon restaurant owned by a Greek man on the corner. The only place you could eat outside, before we had a cafeteria. Well, sometimes somebody would say, let's talk about next week's show over lunch at **Frank's**, that restaurant. And that meant that I would have to go, and my assistant could not go because of being Afro-American, they didn't serve black people in the restaurant. Which was embarrassing for me. I could either say let's not eat, which I wasn't always e-empowered to say, depending on who wanted to eat where and when. Mind you, they would sell my partner **Joe** sandwiches to take out. There was a s – back counter, and he would sometimes have to do that, because he – he – he – well, I don't know, he didn't have time to have a sandwich prepared at home

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– have to eat. And we worked around the clock often, you know, so I mean – came the Civil Rights Act in the 60s and I said, **Joe**, are you gonna eat at **Frank's**? And he said, I been thinking about that. And I said, well, I can see both sides of the argument. Why should you take your custom to a place that wouldn't serve you? In fact, the waitress, when the Civil Rights Act was passed, told me at the meeting that they – I think I'm going to quit because we are going to have to serve niggers. And I made some remark saying, well I think it's time that that act was passed, you know. Well, **Joe** said, on the other hand, if I don't go in to eat at **Joe's**, what was the point of getting the Civil Rights Act? So he said, I think I will. On the other hand, he said, I will fully understand if some of my race do not go in to eat in restaurants that were segregated until yesterday, because – and here comes the important sentence – not everybody can be a pioneer. And I think that's true. I think that there are people who are willing to fight and to be confrontational, and tell people, who say I – I – I don't think I'm up to that. And you can try and – and – and – and influence people, but basically it is also true that some people are pioneers and some people are not. You need the pioneers and you must accept that there are some people who are not. So, when we got into subsequent discussions, I remember some people I considered racist in the poverty program, saying, you know, we'd come out of the building from work and there would be some news headlines out in the street, and they would say that **Stokey Carmichael**, or **Rap**

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**Brown**, aren't they awful troublemakers, what have you. Now, **Martin Luther King**, that's a different proposition. And I said, aren't you forgetting that that's how you looked at **Martin**, until the more extreme **Stokey Carmichaels** and **Rap Brown** came on the scene, by which the – yesterdays revolutionary becomes the classicist, just like we were saying in the arts, or in other things, you see? They – the extreme of today makes the extreme of yesterday the conservative. In fact, sometimes pathetically so. And – and that's – that's how – ho-how that played, and it was an ongoing – an ongoing discussion, and I feel that it has progressed. But one thing we learned in the poverty program is that we were trying to redress past wrongs. If you ask the **redressee**, have we redressed wrongs enough, the answer is inevitably that we have barely scratched the surface. That leads to someone wanting to put on the brakes, if only for political reasons, because if you are doing something that is unpopular with the general public because they say you are redressing too much, and unpopular with the **redressees**, because they say you are not redressing enough, you are losing on both sides. You are losing politically and you are losing the things you are setting out to do. So, you have a very, very, very serious problem, and you inevitably begin to repress a bit together with redressing. In other words, when you put the brakes on redressing wrongs, you are repressing th-the people. By that I mean you are denying them some of the redressing they would like to have, because they – you – you can't do as much as

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they want you to do. So, this – the rather delicate balance between redressing and repressing – and by repressing I don't mean any – any acts of – of – of – of keeping somebody down, I'm merely calling it the insufficient redressing which is perceived as repression, all right? So when you do this – this – this delicate balance. You come to the point where it's almost impossible to walk the tightrope and your political opponents will scream bloody murder that you are redressing too much. And then you have protesters outside your building saying you are not redressing enough. Now, **Shriver** had a great talent for this, he would go down on the sidewalk to the protesters, invite them to his office and sit down with them and reason with them. His successors barricaded themselves in the building, stopped the elevator service, which again illustrates the misconception that things that move forward continue to move forward, they don't. Well, I found that i-in – in some ways progression continues to progress, perhaps. An example that comes to mind is anti-Semitism which probably belongs here. When I first came to this country and – in – in – in the – the end of the 40s, the beaches around **Washington** had signs saying Gentiles only. Not whites only, Gentiles only. And it was in – understood without saying that that meant white Gentiles, okay? And there was Father **Coughlin** and there was **Bilbo** up on the hill spouting anti-Semitism and the likes of which we have mercifully forgotten, how blatant and – and – and crude that anti-sin – Semitism wa – seemed acceptable on the floor of

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the house. Now, shall we say that has become unfashionable, or deemed primitive, whatever, I don't know. And I find it difficult to picture that it would return in totality. Perhaps there's some elements of the extreme so-called religious right that would like to revive those days. I'm sure they wouldn't admit it at this point, because as I say, it's unfashionable, and recognized to be primitive, which I think is a good thing. But we shouldn't delude ourselves that there aren't places where the attitude exists. I find it exists in – in **Europe** to a – to a considerable extent, more overtly than in – in the **United States** now. I was told yesterday by a man who told me that his father was a Nazi, that there is m – that in **Germany**, even though there is this movement of – of – of the young who – who – who abhor their Nazi past, or the Nazi past of their parents, and this man abhors the Nazi past of his father, but he says his father was unemployed, and he was an engineer and he was repairing radios to make a living of sorts. And when **Hitler** came to power he got a job as an engineer. So he thought that – he – he said, what they are doing to the Jews is – that's bad, bad. But look what it has done for me. And **von Stauffenberg**, who tried to assassinate **Hitler** is considered a traitor by one and all, by the vast majority of people. I found that shocking, I didn't know that, I thought – and I still believe there are segments of the people who consider him a resistance person. This – this man told me that there isn't a single memorial or monument to **Stauffenberg**, because vast majority of people consider him a

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traitor. Now, I – I’ve – I – I find that – I mean, that came as a shock. I did not know that. I thought that the disillusionment with **Hitler** and – and by saying disillusionment I’m implying that there was an **illusionment** before, and – and there certainly was. And some of it, if you will understand the burden, like the man who didn’t have a job that got a job, like the peculiar historic situation where you have a German **Reich** that was 90 years old. Before that there were **duchies** and principalities of – of **Munich, Saxony**, whatever. **Prussia**. And that after losing World War I, there was – first of all, it was kept intact, as opposed to the Austro-Hungarian empire, which was 2,000 years old and was completely chopped up because of the ethnic elements, all of whom had been caught in this thing we just mentioned about th-th-the tightrope between repression and redressing, because if an Austrian emperor or Austrian government tried to redress the demands of the Hungarians, or the Serbs, or the Czechs, it was politically unpopular at home and deemed insufficient by the recipients of the programs, who wanted out, never mind how and just sooner better than later. As indeed we are now seeing in **Bosnia** and in all these places where small minorities, whether they are viable or not, completely not caring about whether they can form a viable entity, want to be nationalistically independent. Even the most reasonable among them, and I have talked to some of the most reasonable, will say that first we must have our independence and then we can attempt to confederate. In the meantime,

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the process of getting that independence is bloody and – and destructive. And unreasonable. And – and there's nothing we seem to be able to do about it because we don't necessarily progress. Now, in **Germany**, this – this relatively recent empire of – of – of 90 year old confederation, they yearned to be powerful again. Understandably, the Austro-Hungarians never had any dream of becoming a powerful empire again, because that would mean gluing together the thing where the glue hadn't held, o-of – of – of ethnic minorities, you see? So they never had that ambition, except perhaps in the case of some Austrians who were pan – pan-German thinkers, and thought as part of the German empire, they could see some greatness again. But I wouldn't say there were many until **Hitler** demonstrated that that dream of be – of – of – of regaining power for this German entity could be realized, in that he was immensely successful politically and – and – and – and militarily. And took over one country after the other, right? And if your victorious armies are marching into country after country with a minimum of casualties, and asserting themselves as – as the masters of the world, it's probably hard for the average citizen not to stand and cheer at – at the sidelines, when all that technological hardware is rolling past you and – and the pageantry, at which they were very good. They were very, very skilled in visual pageantry. Well, the – I see a bridge here to something else we wanted to cover, which is **Vietnam**. The bridge is this; when the **Vietnam** situation started, I, after my six years of war and being

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an officer in the British army, in an elite unit, thought that that was the reasonable thing to do. I thought that the domino theory, which had been demonstrated by **Hitler**, that is you don't stop him when he first occupies the **Rhineland**, then he will occupy **Austria**, **Czechoslovakia** and then continue the rest of western **Europe**, all right? If you – what you should have done, clearly, was to stop him when he occupied the **Rhineland**. Well, the parallels seemed obvious. The big threat now was communism. If they took over **Vietnam** and one didn't stop them there, they would take over the rest of southeast **Asia**. And not necessarily as a popular movement, but as a enslaving kind of mechanism. Well, true or false, right? What subsequently changed my mind, not very long after, was the painful realization that just before – because you are right – and even that, of course, becomes – is arguable, but even if you perceive yourself to be right, you can't undertake things that are – that you're going to lose. It's impractical. So for pragmatic reasons if nothing else, the idea of subduing communism in **Vietnam**, which turned out to be a popular nationalistic movement, if you are going to – to fight a losing war, the answer obviously is don't – don't go in the first place. That means admitting that you can't do it. And – and that takes a lot – it's – it's sometimes harder to do for a head of state to say, we think we ought to be doing this, but we can't. It's harder to do than to say okay, go. A-And then afterwards, when you have enormous numbers of people killed and – and maimed, there is, of



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course, no – no easy way back. You – you can't bring them back. But, in a sense, those who were afraid of a domino theory had their – their fears borne out to a considerable extent. After awhile when – when – when communism itself became the image of a failed methodology, the whole thing seems redundant. I mean, what communism were we afraid of? Russian communism, Chinese communism. Well, Russian communism as – is – i-is – is gone. Chinese communism is metamorphosing in all – into all kinds of other things. Whether we are justifiably afraid of that now, is really, **A**, it – it – it doesn't apply in the same sense as it applied at that time. And there were probably a couple of other factors in there. I think that we are still in this country resentful of the former colonial powers, because after all, we were under British rule, and so, if the British were pushed out of the Persian gulf, that didn't really hurt us. I-If the French were pushed out of **Vietnam, Indochina**, that – we were gonna do it better. We were gonna show them that i-it spilt – the failure was because they were colonial powers. Well, our trying to get into these things with limited experience and assume a pseudo-colonial role in c – in – in countries i-in the Persian gulf, or in – in – in – in southeast **Asia**, hasn't worked out too well. And – because the world is readjusting itself and – and the – yesterday's methods progressed as na – as – it begins to be questionable whether progress is progress as we perceive it. And also, it doesn't necessarily go forward. It goes – I-I would think that if you asked people the – the

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academic question whether they would prefer the Persian gulf to be as it was, which means playing footsy with the shah, who was not necessarily a democratic leader, we'd probably happily settle for that at – at this moment, instead of what we've got. What can you do? I-It – the – and – and – and as for the – the non-viable mini-states that spring up as nationalist units, the example of **Slovakia** having split off from **Czech Republic**, because they felt that they were treated like underdogs, with justification. But, by themselves much less viable, and I'm sure that a great many of them are sorry that they split off. There is no visible easy way back to that confederation, that comes after the national thing, as I have been told, you know. No easy way back. So we are – we are perpetually shooting ourselves in the foot all over, I mean, not you and I, but people everywhere, in their own situations.

**[break]**

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape four, side **A**. And you had told me about your professional career, and you told me about the social changes that you saw in this country in the 60s and into the 70s. But you haven't spoken to me about your personal life and your family. Can you tell me about your family?

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A: Well, I came, if you recall, from – from **England** on a **Fulbright** and sterling – pounds sterling were not convertible, so I had no money. And the art schools were not boarding schools, so I lived at International House in **New York** at 500 **Riverside** Drive. And that was very stimulating because there were students from all over, and many friends, which I maintain to this day. Some of them I haven't – I hadn't seen in, I guess almost 50 years, but my friendships are of the nature that I can pick them up any time as if there had been no time gap. We had recently been to **Hawaii**, where I had friends from International Student House whom I hadn't seen since. And it worked like we had never parted. I – one day, a Greek student in **New York** who lived at the house, said let's hitchhike to **Washington**. I'm going to hitchhike to **Washington**, anybody want to come along? I said sure. I – I've never been there, and I know somebody in **Washington**. Let me try and telephone and see whether I can arrange something. So I did what in those days was an unusual activity, a long distance telephone call. And I went and called **Washington**, and I had no address of the person I was looking for, who had been the fiancée of a friend of mine who was a commando colleague in – in **England** and in **Normandy**, we both went in on the same team to **Normandy**, and we were very, very close friends. And we double dated in **England**. I was engaged to an Irish girl from northern **Ireland**. Have we covered that before? Well, the – his fiancée was – had come out on the ch – ki – children's transport from

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**Czechoslovakia** and had work in **London** for the Czech government in exile until the coup in **Czechoslovakia** when she lost her job. She had been alone to the second international conference, annual conference of the International Monetary Fund, and they had offered her a job in **Washington**. And when she lost her job in **London**, she accepted the job in **Washington**, because why not, for a year, and had – in other words, come for a year at the International Monetary Fund in **Washington**. I couldn't remember the name of the International Monetary Fund and I first asked th-the **Washington** telephone operator whether I – she had a listing by name, and she didn't. So I said well, there's an organization that belongs to the United Nations. And she said, the United Nations are in **Flushing Meadows, New York**. And I said, I know that, but there is some branch, it's called the United Nations Fund, or the United Nations bank, or something. And she said, sir, United Nations are in **Flushing Meadows, Long Island, New York**. After we'd been over that a couple of times, I said, I tell you what, forget it, and I hung up. Obviously I wasn't going to get anywhere and I went to see the Greek student who had wanted to hitchhike to **Washington**, and I said, I'm having problems about this **Washington** thing, I can't reach my party. And he said, I've decided not to go. I said okay, it's off. So it didn't happen. Awhile later, **Alice** went to **London** on home leave, **London** being her home, and met with our mutual friend and – and other friends from the commandos. And they said, oh,

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when you go back through **New York**, you must bring this book that is just out to **Peter**. The book was “**The Green Beret**,” the first book about the commandos by **Hilary Saint George Saunders**, a historian. And she had said, oh, **Peter** is in **New York**? I didn’t know that. And she brought me the book. Now, I – I have to go back a moment and say that when she left for – for **Washington** from **London**, her fiancé said to me, I have – he was in business already and I was in art school – he said, I have a shipment coming in in the docks, and I can’t take off, I have to be there. But you are an art student, you can take time off. Why don’t you go with her to – whatever it was, **Cooks**, and help her make the arrangements? Anyone who knows **Alice** knows that she needed my help like the hole in the head. She – when she worked for the International Monetary Fund, she made travel arrangements for 60 people, and my helping her was a laugh. But I took time off and went down the road to **Cooks** on **Southampton Row**, **King’s Way**, which was five minutes from my school, and gave her, as – as a matter of fact, a going away present of one of my little **Ashanti** gold weights that I had acquired during my six months in **Africa** at the end of the war. And she brought me the book and I told her the story about how I had almost come to **Washington** and she said, well, you must come and see **Washington**. And I said sure. And of course, having no money, I hitchhiked. **Holland** tunnel or whatever, and in those days, if you got a ride straight through it took seven and a half hours, and you never got a ride straight through, so it took

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10 - 11 - 12 hours. And I would start at – after school, about four o'clock, and – and hitchhike. There was, of course, no **New Jersey** turnpike. There was no bridge over the **Delaware**. There was a ferry. There was no tunnel under **Baltimore** and no route 95, but route one with traffic lights and what have you. I usually hit **Baltimore** in the early hours of the morning, like two o'clock a-and – and usually on a truck which dropped me off somewhere in the harbor district. And on one occasion, two potential muggers followed me and in fact I – I had a suitcase and a portfolio to carry, so they could walk faster than I could, and they – I – I decided I w – I would – I would walk in the middle of the road so I wouldn't be pulled in anywhere, and I stopped and they came and said, at two in the morning, and asked me for a light. And I said, I don't smoke. Is there anything else you want? And I had a metal suitcase which I held, which I was going to throw at them and run, if necessary. And they decided that this was not a good proposition and they decided not to – to mug me. And – but it was an unpleasant incident and looked very threatening. And a – another story that comes to mind is it – one time it poured, and it was just before **Alice's** birthday and I was – I had bought her ano – a new umbrella, and it was gift wrapped. And I carried that umbrella gift wrapped and wouldn't open it because I didn't want to spoil the thing, I carried it under my jacket so it wouldn't get wet. Anyway, after hitchhiking to **Washington** a few times, w-we met in **New York** and in **Washington**. And in the following spring,

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1950, we were married. And **Alice** had arranged some interviews for me in **Washington** to find a job, and the person who was going to help me find the job ran a small public relations agency, and he desired – he si – he decided that he would hire me himself and call it public relations and advertising and I was the art director of this small outfit, and it was not an altogether positive experience. I think I earned 30 dollars a week and that was low even by the standards of that time. But I had quite some exposure. I did three full color ads for “**Esquire**” magazine and I found that I had to solicit some of the jobs because nobody else seemed to be doing it and after awhile everybody quit and I was the only employee. But one of them had preceded me into television and he offered me a – a job in television. We’ve – may have covered that before. Anyway, in the meantime, **A-Alice** and I had moved into a one room apartment on – on **Belmont** Street in **Washington**, which was rather – rather primitive, but not – not at all bad, and after a period we moved downtown into an air conditioned apartment. That was the height of luxury. Small one, also. And we had our first child, a daughter, **Anne**, who from a very early age wanted to do professionally exactly what I was doing and – and helped me, even as a child. And got very proficient and became a good graphic designer and is one to this day. Then we had a second daughter, **Kim**, who also – all of them leaned in directions that I had marginally been involved in. She started to write poetry, which we have done traditionally in my

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family for every birthday. And of course, she went beyond that and she became a writer and is at this stage a contributing editor to “**Vanity Fair**” and “**Time**” magazine, and is writing her second book, called tentatively, “**Keys to the Kingdom,**” meaning **Michael Eisner** and the **Disney** operation. That’s big league writing, not the sort of thing that – that I’m doing. Well, as – this morning, as a matter of fact, in looking for a certain book, I came across the album of – of birthday cards over the years, and it’s quite a collection because they are both graphics and – and – and at least doggerel verse, and it’s a heartwarming memento that I – I – I think i-I – astonished me because I had forgotten some of them, they’ve been so long ago. But the tradition goes on. The tradition also goes on to my third child which – **Tim**, a – a – a son who works for the Discovery Channel as senior manager of special events, and lives only five minutes from my house. And he writes absolutely beautiful birthday poets – poems. Everybody knows what birthday poems sound like and I sometimes wince at the bad meter and – and the suggested ego trip of all of us who do this. But my daughter **Kim** and my son **Tim**, write absolutely gorgeous ones, far better than anything I’ve ever done. And incidentally, my children being named **Anne**, **Kim** and **Tim**, the last one was **Kim**’s idea, together with the support of her older sister. And we said, if we call him **Tim** and we calling you – him – or we call you, you will never know which one we are calling because it sounds alike. And she said, that’s the idea. A-As you



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can see where she comes from. Well, they're all married. **Anne** is married to an architect and lives in **Washington** and has three children; **David**, who is now 11, **Sam**, who is nine and **Hannah** who is almost six. And **Kim** had great trouble – she is married to **Gary Simpson**, who is in television, movies in **Hollywood**. She – **Kim** moved to **Hollywood** because she covers **Hollywood**. She used to work for the “**Washington Post**” for many years for style, but now she doesn't work for a papers, she writes the book and contributes articles to those two publications. She had great difficulty having a baby. She had 10 in-vitros attempting to have a baby, all failed. And ultimately succeeded by having a – a surrogate carry her child. The baby is hers and her husband's, implanted into a surrogate, who carried it and it's now a few months old, a little girl. And the – one thing that comes to mind is when she and the surrogate were together in the hospital for the birth of the baby, the baby cried during the night, and **Kim** said, the baby is crying. And the surrogate mother said, it's not my baby, you go and take care of it. And she has been doing that happily ever since. Took some adjustment, because when you don't carry the baby, the impact on your life, whe – which suddenly changes without the relief of not carrying it any more is – is quite an experience, that I hadn't really anticipated. But she adjusted to it very well, and now all is going very well. And as we sit here and speak, **Tim** and his wife **Laurie**, who also works for Discovery cable television, she is vice-president in charge of marketing, expect their first baby. The

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phone could ring now. I know we've turned them off, but even so, and she might be having that baby. We don't know whether it's a boy or a girl, any – any day now. The – all three children, by the way, went to school in – in this area, in the **Washington** area, and all three of them didn't like high school, and wanted to get out as soon as possible. So, it was possible in the district to take, I don't know, English four and I forget what else, math, over the summer and graduate early. All three of them did that. You didn't have to be brilliant to graduate early, just had to take a couple of summer courses. And they wanted to avoid the graduation ceremony, none of them wanted to go through it, peculiarly perhaps, and all of them wanted out. And all of them – each one of them did something different with the year they gained by graduating a year early. **Anne** worked for a design studio before she went to art school. She had helped me all along. And after a period of good experience, went to **Pratt** in – in **New York**, and was in many ways ahead, because she had the practical experience. And this was in a period when practicality was not big in the art schools. You know, they would say, design a logo for – design a logo for a – an – and use – draw it on a brick. If that sounds absurd, that was – I'm – I'm doing this on purpose, or a cinder block, because that was characteristic of the time. Practicality was not the main thing. You did things that were impractical, but original, okay? It was the post-modern I talked to you about before. Well, so that was how she spent her year that she gained. **Kim** did

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something entirely different. She went to visit my wife's sister in **London**. And in **London** the county council runs all kinds of courses, which are affordable and very, very good. So she learned – she took courses in all the things she might want to be interested in later, having no idea where she was going to go. She took one in psychology, one in ceramics, one in Italian, one in drama, and I forget what else. And after she was through, she decided none of the above, and she became an English major, and now it became very important at what school she was to continue. And one of my colleagues on – a very senior older person in the poetry program, had been a president of **Bryn Mawr**, and she – and when I talked about the program said, oh **Kim** absolutely must go to **Bryn Mawr** and she took her there. And there was a sort of a – it really fitted **Kim** like – like a glove. There is a traditional Poet Laureate in **Bryn Mawr** who is anonymous un – and writes under the name of **Applebee**, which was the name of the gym teacher who introduced hockey to schools in the **United States**. And **Applebee** is selected by the outgoing **Applebee** after submissions of sample poems. And nobody knows who it is, and they write snide poems about – well, critical of – of – of the school management or whatever, or social gossip bu – and with – with double entendres galore. And **Kim** became **Applebee** in her junior year, I think. And the – the – I – I even recall the interview because **Kim** had read more books than anybody I know, and sh – before she went to college. And when you go for an interview they want to see

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your reading list. And she went to **Cornell** and they looked at her reading list, which was a – a foldout, a-a – it was so long, and said, about what we would expect and that offended **Kim** deeply because she knew it wasn't true. It was a putdown, you see. And at **Bryn Mawr**, when she showed her reading list, the interviewer put it aside after glancing at it and said yes, but what is your favorite – who is your favorite author? And **Kim** said, without hesitation, **Jane Austen**. And the interviewer said, she is mine too, let's talk about **Jane Austen**. They talked for three hours about **Jane Austen**. So there's no question she was going to go anywhere else. **Tim** used his extra year to take an internship in television, because he had been interested in – in radio and television from being a – a toddler. In fact, in his house hangs a picture of him with his first phonograph when he was about four years old, and he is carefully putting down the needle, and subsequently worked as a disc jockey for the university of dis – dis – **District of Columbia** station. He had a program called **Jazzmasters** with **Tim Masters**. And when **C-Span** bought the station and there was no more jazz, the hearts of all the listeners bled, because they were so attached to that classical jazz program. And he misses it. He did it for, I think 12 years, as a sideline, unpaid. But he has been in – in some form of – of broadcasting all – all his life. Well, where were we? Yes, my wife **Alice**, who came for a year, stayed for 36 years. She became an administrative officer, and her – by now there are few people left who remember

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her, but there are some, and when we go there for some function, or if we meet somebody by chance, she would – was literally a legend in that organization, because having been a – a – from a children's transport, you know, and having been self reliant from an early teenage age, she was so protective of the people working on the staff, that she would tell newly arrivals that the first thing they'd have to do is to start thinking of their careers in terms of security and retirement and so on. And very few people – very few young people think about that at all. And now there are many – there are many out there who are thanking her for her being so solicitous. And she is a most remarkable person. She is a – a – the – the fastest at many things that I can – that I've ever seen. I mean, if I – if we go shopping and I get out of the car and I can't see where she is, it is because she is already in the house, having carried 50 percent of the bags and dinner is almost ready. You know, that sort of thing. And she never hesitated to have a social life, to – to invite people, while she was working. And how – how is – is – by today's standards, unimaginable. And – and I – I don't think – I mean, some of my children have to have – have dinner party, what have you. But to think of the kind of dinner party she would have for friends after she came home from work, and it was ready and delicious at the time when you didn't think she had hung up her coat yet. It's just a very special talent. When we were recently visiting friends on **Cape Cod**, we had an engagement to which we had to go, I'll come back to that

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later, and we were going to have dinner afterwards, at our guests'. And we had been talking about a continent-ental dessert that is – is a big favorite in central and eastern **Europe**. And in central and eastern **Europe** it's a dessert – it's a dumpling, either with plums or apricots. But she has figured out that it's better with peaches, because there's more fruit and the peaches are so good in this country, and in – particularly this year, by the way. So, she said, I'm going to make that for dessert. And they said, well do it afterwards, because we really have to go. And she said, it won't take a minute. She had du-dumplings for five people ready while the others were putting on their jackets to go to the function. And so when we came back, all she had to do is put them in the water, and they were done, you know, I mean none – none of them could believe that she had actually accomplished that in this extremely narrow time span. Doesn't bother her [**indecipherable**]. And she has become a most valued counselor for my activities, which of course means particularly the book I have written. And the reason I wrote that book is because I felt that as the interest in the Holocaust and in World War II revived, people were writing books and telling stories that were horrible, and in recounting their – their stories, and I felt that someone ought to stress the fact that not everybody went like sheep to the slaughter, but some of us had the fortunate opportunity to be able to fight back. So I – and in addition, I wanted to commemorate all those who were less lucky that I was, because a lot of my refugee friends who succeeded in ha – in

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– in doing special and hazardous duty, were killed or maimed or at least wounded.

I was one of the lucky ones that came through without a scratch except a tiny grenade splinter in my rear end that I threw myself in house clearing, by being a little cowboy-like – cavalier about how I tossed the grenade. Which was partly encouraged by the management to be a little macho. Came with the job. So, I wrote my first book as a septuagenarian. It took me years and years to do it, because I had no idea how one writes a book. But I'd always had the inclination to tell stories, as you can tell from this interview. So I – I first wrote – I tried to do it by tape recording while walking the dog when I'd had a heart attack. And I – my children ga-gave – borrowed somebody's dog or something, a very ugly Dalmatian. And I had to walk this dog twice a day, and they gave me a tape recorder and they said, that way you can get your – the book you always talk about, written. And I recorded while walking the dog. You can hear cars going by and stuff. And then I tried to get it transcribed, because I can't type. And I found several people who said they would do it, and they had two common denominators. One, they were very expensive, and two, they were absolutely incompetent at understanding what I was saying, perhaps because of my accent, perhaps because there are many proper nouns in there that they were unfamiliar – that were unfamiliar to them. And I struggled. I tried to transcribe it myself, I found I couldn't do it. So some friend said, you got to get yourself a word

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processor and I did. It's a very primitive machine, a word processor and the printer. And I struggled to learn it and found that every now and again it would absolutely balk and not do what I told it to do. So I needed to call friends to help me to get it going again, to jumpstart it. And I found that this happened so often, that one friend wouldn't do it, I couldn't bother the same person, so I alternated about three friends and called them with my emergencies, in the middle of the night at times, because I couldn't stop, I had to go on. And that – that – with their patience and my persistence, that seemed to work. And then I talked to some publishers without submitting it, but I – I submitted, I think a synopsis to one in **England**, with whom I met and he said, you know, it doesn't all have to be true. And that finished it as far as I was concerned, because that was precisely my purpose, that it should all be true. H-He said, you know, fiction is acceptable. And I – as long as you have a thrill on every page. I thought there were enough thrills without having to invent them. So we parted before we even started. And then I – I went to various people for advice and some of the advice was good and some of it was – was not. Some people said, you must have more dialog, some people said you must have less dialog. Some people said you must be sequential. And I think that's true. People want to know how it continues.

Q: Speaking of continuing, I have to pause to change the tape. Just one moment.

[break] This is an continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum



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volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape four, side **B**, and you were telling me about your book, and the genesis of your book. Let me first ask you, can you give me the title of your book?

A: The book is called, “**Striking Back.**” I – I literally polled some of my commando friends and other people for a title and they made all kinds of suggestions. I can’t pin down where the title ultimately came from, except perhaps i-in discussion between the publisher and myself, and utilizing, and re – rattling off all the names that have been suggested. And the publisher wrote the subtitle modified from something that I suggested, namely, it’s called “**Striking Back: A Jewish Commandos War Against the Nazis.**” I wanted to say Jewish refugee commandos, but they said, the word refugee has a different connotation nowadays and people wouldn’t know what it means in this context. And besides, it’s too long. So there it is, a Jewish refugees war against the Nazis. And a – well, how did I find a publisher and be – believe me, people have asked me since, how do you get a book published, like I’m the expert. And of course I – first time author, and I – what do I know? So, the – the way – the way this came about was that the historian **Stephen Ambrose**, who was the head of the – president of the **Eisenhower** Institute in **New Orleans**, and professor at the University of **Louisiana** in **New Orleans**, and the **D-Day** Museum in **New Orleans**, called together **D-Day** veterans from – mostly from the **U.S.** forces, but some from –

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from **England** and one from **Germany**. And – people who had experienced **D-Day**. And a friend in **New York**, **Harry Nomberg**(ph) called me, he was a commando friend, he served under the name of **Harry Drew**, and he said, my wife and I are going, why don't you come with **Alice**? And we decided we'd all go. And we had work sessions and it was absolutely fascinating because you could talk to people who had been involved in some other activity on **D-Day** that I had seen but never fully understood. And now you could ask questions, how did you do this? How did these rocket firing craft work that were on our left, and so on. And we all submitted a tape beforehand and **Ambrose** told me that he liked mine am – and considered it to be among his best. And we – and then he wrote the book, **D-Day**, which became a best seller and my story is in there in multiple installments about my **D-Day** experience. So I mentioned to him that I we – was – I wanted to write a book, for the reasons I've already stated. And he said, you must absolutely. And I said, don't I need an agent? And he said, yes you do, why don't you use mine? And he recommended me to his agent in **New York**, and that didn't work out at all, because the man told me on th – I never met him, but the man told me on the phone that he was suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and it would be quite some time before he got around to reading my book, because he – he couldn't in his present condition. That was very discouraging. Secondly – I mean, I had notions that I'd get it out for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **D-Day**, and it – I

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was clearly not going to make it. Then he said, it will require extensive editing, and he recommended an editor to me, who said he charged 250 dollars an hour. And I said, I can't afford for you to read my book, leave alone to edit it. And we made a – an agreement that I would pay him an amount for giving me advice, after reading some of the book. And he gave me some advice, some of it good, some of it I discarded, which was to be anticipated. Then a man published a book about my overall unit, that is a – my – my commando unit, in which I was fortunate enough to – to be able to strike back. It was number three troop, 10 commando. The 10 commando had two French troops, a Dutch troop, a Norwegian troop, a Polish troop. I think we've been through that. And he wrote about all of us, you know, so we were one chapter in that book. And this man had done considerable research and was familiar with all the **dramatis personae**. So I told – I – I – he offered to help me edit, and – and to advise me. And in return, he was writing additional books on the **SOE**, special operations of the **U.S.** – of the allied forces, and he needed research done at the National Archives, because it didn't exist in **England**. So I did the research for him for days on end, and found very interesting things that he could use in his book and in return he – we exchanged tapes and he advised me. When I told **Stephen Ambrose** that he and – that I – I didn't get along with his agent, he said, oh, I haven't used him in years. But naturally it didn't occur to him to, you know, to – to call me and say I didn't use – I don't use that agent any

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more. And he said, well, there are several options, and one of the ideas that came up was that I should talk to the people at the Holocaust Museum. And I talked to Mr. **Aronowitz** at the Holocaust Museum, who had been in publishing in a previous life, and he said, tell you what I'll do. I-I will print out publishers who I think would be interested in your book. Now, they won't all be big publishers, some of them specialize in military memoirs and that's probably a prime consideration. And he printed out the list and the top publisher on the list was **Presidio Press** in **California**, and I sent them – a-and Mr. **Aronowitz** advised me that the way to do it was to telephone and ask for the acquisition editor. Now, the average first time author doesn't know that, and sends it blind. Well, I sent it to the acquisition editor and got a letter back saying we are interested in your book. First publisher I submitted it to. And they accepted the book, they said they print 20 volumes a year, and they get 1600 submissions. And before the book was printed, it was ti – the movie options were bought by **Miramax**. And recently the German translation options were bought by a German publisher, whom I'm trying to contact to offer my services in case they need any help, because I want to make sure that it's done right. Now, the book has totally changed my life. As a first time septuagenarian author, I am being asked to speak here, there and everywhere and to give book talks. The story I told you about the fruit dumplings, the commitment to which we were not to be late was at the **Eldredge** Library in **Chatham** on **Cape**

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**Cod.** And this is a retiree audience, by no means Jewish, and they were a marvelous audience. And I spoke for about an hour, and then I – we had a book signing at the bookstore about three houses away. And I said, I think I – I have to finish now, so that we make it in time to the bookstore. And the people started to yell, don't stop, keep going, we want to hear more. Which is fascinating, I mean it's – it's – they were really interested and into it and asked intelligent questions and I have since discovered that in these little **New England** towns, the library is really the focal point of the community. That's where people gather. I mean, it's a sort of intellectual exercise. And that's – that's always a good sign and very gratifying. But apart from that, and I spoke to an Orthodox synagogue in **London** where there were 450 people and no microphone because I was billed as the – the Shabbat preacher, if you will. And so nobody could turn on a microphone and I couldn't hold a piece of paper, because that's working. I mean, carrying the piece of paper. And so I thought how, as a sergeant major you would have to shout that you could be heard at the other end of the parade ground and I thought I sa – I – I did that when I was a sergeant, I'll do it again. Be – the rabbi was doing it. And it worked very well, and I was given all kinds of honors, opening the ark and closing the ark, I was worried whether it was – you – you asked earlier about my religious orientation, which was – activity, which was somewhat marginal. I was **Bar Mitzvahed**, and my grandfather was a very religious man, but he never explained

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a – a – a word about – not even at Seder, he just rattled off his prayers and – and was a – not a teacher. Well, so I was worried whether I was going to do all these things right in the Orthodox synagogue, I'd never officiated in – in any synagogue leave alone an Orthodox one. And they said there will be somebody behind you who will tell you to do all the right things, and it turned out it was very, very simple, it worked very well, and I shook hands for umpteen officials in a given order [**indecipherable**] traditional. I also spoke at a Reform synagogue to largely veterans. And there is an a-meric – an organization called **AJEX**, the Association of Jewish ex-Servicemen and Women. And they organized that in **Edgware**, a suburb of **London**. And I spoke there, and when I finished – again, marvelous audience, the – there wer-were questions and one man stood up in the audience and said, you say your mission is to spread the word that you didn't go like lambs to slaughter, you are accomplishing that, I trust. But you are accomplishing another mission that you don't even know of. And he held up a British army pay book, which every soldiers carries. And he said, this is my uncle's pay book. I'm a member of the **Sachs**(ph) family of – of refugees from **Germany**. And my uncle served under the name of **Seymour** in your commando troop. And until we read your book just now, the family did not know what happened to him beyond the war office telegram saying that he was killed in action. In your book you say that i-in the night assault crossing of the river **Rhine**, you were in a amphibious track

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cra – vehicle called the **Buffalo**, and that the **Buffalo** next to yours in mid-river was hit and burst into flames, and that nobody got out alive, as far as you know. And two of the people on it, you say, were **Fogel(ph)** and **Sachs(ph)** who served under the name of [**indecipherable**] and **Seymour**. And this is the first time we found out what happened to my uncle. And that brings closure to our feelings and we thank you for it. And people in the audience started to cry, and it was very emotional, and I felt that it somehow made it all worthwhile to have done this, and struggled to write the book and to do this. And that's by no means all. I had the phone call from a woman who said that her name was **Claudine Schindler**.

Actually **Claudine Arbour Schin-Schindler**. And she had seen the article about me that was caused by my book in the **B'nai B'rith** international magazine, th-the monthly. And it said that my name had been **Arany**, and her name had been **Arany**, and were we related? And she started to lay out her family. And she is the granddaughter of my father's oldest brother, who was a – quite a character, in fact the name **Arany** was invented by him. The family name had been **Freed(ph)** but on – being in **Hungary** he wanted to have a Hungarian name, and what's more, he was a sort of macho character who in the 20s wore a black leather jacket and rode a red Indian motorcycle. And my father imitated him in almost everything, his older brother. They were both jewelers. **Arany** in Hungarian means gold, so it was sort of a pun to have that name. And in addition, it's the name of the national poet

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of **Hungary**, **Arianosh(ph)**, and aristocratic, he wanted tha – obviously. And he – he was divorced from a very nice woman whom I knew much better than I knew my Uncle **Carol(ph)**, **Ilsa(ph)** who ran a – a pensionne in the country that belonged to some very wealthy relatives of hers. But she was sort of the poor relative. Lovely woman, who invited us as children a couple of times to this pensionne in the country and I have very nice memories of that. We had to be on our best behavior because of all the elegant people there. And she had two sons, **Aussie(ph)** and **Jurry(ph) Arany**, and apparently they got out. We were not in touch. And they got out and lived in **France** throughout the war, running from place to place in hiding, as people did who survived in **France**. And then one of them got – oh, in **France** they changed the name **Arany** to **Arbor**, spelled like the English word arbor, but pronounced **arbore(ph)**. And one of them got to **Brazil**, and then got the rest of the family, postwar to **Brazil**, and some went on to the **United States**. And this woman was terribly excited about having found a relative because she didn't know that she had any relatives at all. And her father is dead, and so is her uncle, the two sons of **Carol(ph)** and **Ilsa(ph)**. And she said, I will tell my brothers and they'll probably call you. And the next day I had a telephone call from **Brazil**, from what is after all a first cousin once removed. And they are all coming – he is coming to **America** in November, and he'll rent a car and bring down as many of the family as he can. And as I said, all very, very excited. So I



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found some close relatives I didn't know I had. I mean, I knew they existed, but that's the next generation, you see? The generation after. And the – th-th-there are three grown children of the woman in **New Jersey**, and the – the youngest just graduated from college. And I did know at one point that I thought the two sons of my uncle had gotten out, because in **London**, in her apartment building, my mother needed some wrapping paper once, and she borrowed it from a Mrs.

**Buerger**(ph) who was living at the other end of the corridor. And Mrs.

**Buerger**(ph) gave her a used piece of brown wrapping paper, that's all she had on hand.

And on it was the name of one of these two boys, cousins. But my mother, being divorced from my father, had no interest in taking up a relationship, and she just remembered the fact that she had seen the name, and so maybe they got out, she said, and I s – I said, ask Mrs. **Buerger** whether she knows these people. And nothing ever happened, it – it ran off into the sand.

Q: How has your book been received with respect to sales?

A: I have had nothing but excellent reviews. Some of the major papers have not reviewed it. The – and – and you learn a whole new thing, you know, about what to – what did I know about publishing? A woman called me from "**The Wall Street Journal**," saying I review books for "**The Wall Street Journal**," but they devote very little space to it. I loved your book, but – and I wrote a review, but it may not appear. And, it didn't, because there are lots of books and limited space and that's how it is. And the publisher's weekly pub – which guides libraries, published it very favorably, and suddenly at the be –

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be – beginning of last months, the “**Jerusalem Post**” reviewed it, with a very, very good review. And the – it – it suddenly rekindles a – you know, like – like a fire that dies down and then catches a – a flame anew, this goes on and on. And I get phone calls and letters from people all over the world. I had a letter – a-and a – a tape – a **CD** from **Australia** from a man who said he is sending me a **CD** of the song, “**The Bells of Aberdovey**,” which is where we trained in **North Wales**, and I knew of the song. I’ve forgotten how it goes, but I – I remember it from that time. And he said, I am the first tenor on this record, because I am Welsh. I live in **Australia** now, but I thought you might like to have it. So he sent me a **CD** of “**The Bells of Aberdovey**.” I mean, as I say, weird things happen all – all the time. And various friends whom I – with whom I had lost contact have contacted me because they’ve heard of – seen the book and – and sought me out, or they wrote – or they wrote to the publisher to forward mail to me. One of my best friends is the son of an Austrian matinee idol who – **Hubert Marischka**. His name is **Franz Marischka** and he lives – he was in the Pioneer Corps with me, he lives in **Munich** now. He came to spend the day with me in **London** from **Munich** especially. And he is the grandson of **Victor Léon** who wrote the libretto for the “**Merry Widow**,” and the godson of **Franz Lehar**. And quite a character in his own right, and we had a marvelous day comparing notes. I would never have recognized him, he is a – a – a little portly, bald man, and he was a dashing, blonde, young movie actor when I knew him. So – but we had a lot of fun. And that happens all the time.

Q: What is the status of the movie that’s being – that was optioned [**indecipherable**]

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A: The status of the movie may be known to the moviemakers, a-and – and I – not even to the publisher, because the publisher handed it to the **William Morris** Agency, who acts as his agent, and o-other than my having a contract with the publisher for a portion of subsidiary rights, lest anyone thinks that – well, one of the English papers wrote the last paragraph in a review saying, and **Peter Masters** sold his book, “**Striking Back**,” to the movies for a million dollars. Well, don’t you believe it. First of all, there’s no million dollars. Secondly, the **William Morris** Agency gets 10 percent off the top. The publisher gets 50 percent of the remainder. That’s already si – more than 60 percent if you take then off the top. Then my – my daughter **Kim** who covers **Hollywood** told me, you have to have a lawyer when there’s a movie contract. And I said, why, naively. And she said, try to go it alone and see what happens to you. So I have a lawyer in **Hollywood**. He gets five percent, okay? Then they bought the movie option, that doesn’t mean they are making the movie just yet, although they assigned a writer and a producer, which is promising. But I haven’t seen a piece of paper, but when I ask I am told it’s a done deal. So a done deal is a favorite expression in the publishing business. Now, people expect me to tell them how to get books published [**indecipherable**] and I used to say, look, I’m a novice and I don’t know and that didn’t seem to make them very happy, they thought I was hedging. So after awhile I decided I would try and give them more of an answer. And so I came up with the following formula. And they send me manuscripts, okay? So I said, it takes three ingredients. One, you have to have an unusual story, because no matter how moving your story is, if it is one of many, the chances are it will not get published. So, an unusual story is one. Number two, you have to be able to tell it reasonably well. I

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mean, you can be edited and helped, but reasonably well. And the most important ingredient is the third one, and that is luck. Because I don't know, I mean, I feel I've – as I say in my book, I've been lucky all my life. Lucky to get out, lucky to be able to get into **England**, lucky to be able to join the army, lucky to be able to get into an elite assault unit and be able to fight back. Lucky to survive that. Lucky to be able to get my book written and accepted by the first publisher. Lucky to have the movie thing, lucky to have all the other things that are happening in conjunction with it. So, that's what it takes as far as I'm concerned, and look, if the movie doesn't turn out as I would hope it would, or isn't made before – as long as I live – I don't know how these things work – my wife **Alice** points out, you've done your thing, you've written your book. Right now there is a debate raging about – raging is perhaps an overstatement. But one of the members of my troop, who was in combat very briefly because he stepped on a mine and lost a foot in **Italy**, so he was out of it. He continues his law studies, became a judge in **England**, which isn't bad for a Jewish refugee boy from **Europe**, and he's now a retired judge. And he picked up the ball as it were, when my book came out and he wants us to contribute money to a monument in **North Wales**. And the – to my utter shock, the words on it did not include the word Jewish. So I started a sort of agitating, lobbying campaign to enlist support of ex-members of the troop or widows or families to insist that it does include the words Jewish. He – the judge went so far as to say that my saying a Jewish commandos war against the Nazis in the subtitle was a blur and a s – and the flaw in my book. And after I got over the shock and – and told him off about making such an excessive statement, I had quite the time writing him a letter saying, having been a judge I suppose

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you feel you must be judgmental in some direction. I am slowly beginning to understand where this comes from, and it's very simple. First of all, this is not **America**, where we have just finished talking about the fact that 50 years ago there was overt anti-Semitism. It has become unfashionable as I say – as I put it. It's, in sophisticated circles equally unfashionable in **England**, but there is the fear of it among Jews in Britain, apparently. I'm – I'm – and here's the thing. When we were first changing our names and becoming a different person, that was rather fun for most of us, because having been a hate object in **Germany, Austria, Hungary**, having been a poor refugee, as most of us were, having been in the labor unit, which was the bottom of the army, becoming an elite unit member and wearing the green beret and the parachute wings for which we had qualified, and then knowing we were risking considerable – our lives, o-our limbs, carried with it a certain satisfaction and pride. And to be a different person, I mean, I – I became ultimately, well, a commando, a commando sergeant, an officer in the **Oxfordshire** and **Buckinghamshire** Light Infantry, a good regiment. And I am **Peter Masters** and – and gone is the refugee **Peter Arany**, you see? Now, some of them relished that so much that they didn't want to step out of it because they felt it would be stepping back. And so, to my utter shock, one of my friends in **Edinburgh** where I spoke at the Church of **Scotland** church hall, and a classmate of mine from grade school invited lots of people and arranged it so I had a very nice audience. Yet, a commando friend of mine in **Scotland** didn't invite anybody. And I suddenly realized that the reason he didn't invite anybody is because it would have blown his cover, now. Because he has a Scottish name. He has very little accent, much less than I do, and I suppose he can account for that by

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our cover story where he was aw – brought up or something. He is the president of – or was, of the local rugby club. And if – if he – if he invited people to something called, “**Striking Back: A Jewish Commandos War Against the Nazis**,” and he was one of the commandos, the thought would occur to them that he too is a Jewish commando from **Europe**, and he doesn’t want to be. And the judge probably doesn’t want to be anything except a retired judge. And that goes for quite a few. Now it doesn’t go for everybody. The widow of my friend **Harry Nomberg**(ph) says who – whose name is – is **Beatrice Nomberg**(ph) and she is from **Argentina**. Catholic, and **Harry’s** dead, died recently. And she says **Harry** wouldn’t have wanted it any other way but that it says mostly Jewish. And the judge says that was not a prerequisite for joining the troop. It was not in the criteria that qualified you and I said, that’s true. But where would they have found German speaking people who wanted to do special and hazardous duty, if it had not been for refugees that were Jewish and German speaking. And he says, well, some of them were – were not Jewish. They were half Jewish or they were baptized, or they were – they didn’t even know that the – part of their family was Jewish. And I said, the Nazis knew.

[break]

Q: – uation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape five, side **A**. We have talked about a number of different things over the hours that we’ve been together, and I would like to go back and finish up some –

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A: Yes.

Q: – bits of unfinished business.

A: Sure.

Q: Let me go chronologically. In your professional life we got as far as, I think about 1984. Can you pick up your professional life from that time?

A: Sure. In – in 1984, I retired. It was the earliest time that I could retire, and that always brings with it certain financial disadvantages, but I felt it was high time for me to get a – get out of what had become a rather difficult thing. The time of enthusiasm that we had had in the – in the poverty program was long gone. Even the transformation into wanting to take on the – the musty look of government and try and brush it up into something more contemporary and positive, that was beginning to ebb away and the fights were more frequent than – than the – the – the challenges. And there were various – I – I – that's another thing in that period of government, and that is that you can have an administration, a government with which you agree politically, but the person in charge of your agency may not be at all conducive to doing any positive things in – in what I considered my field and my charge. Or reversely, you might have an administration that is unacceptable politically to you, and you have no choice until next election as it were, and then you may lose. And the – a-and yet it might be possible to do some positive things because you have somebody who is interested and who cares. Now, in the overall,

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in order to improve, and there have been conscious efforts of bringing good design to government, not always, what shall I say, enlightened efforts. But there were times when **Nancy Hanks** was in charge of – of the endowment, and she had a way to get around politicians that was admirable. And in – so – so there – there were times when it – when one had the feeling that something worthwhile could be accomplished, and there were other times when it seemed utterly hopeless. Utterly hopeless. And we – I – I remember – I remember trying to get – to come up with a formula a-and saying, well – o-or – at least an analysis, a diagnosis of why things were so hopeless at times and it is because the government is made up almost entirely of lawyers. All right? Now, I have nothing against lawyers per se, but with the very specialized methodology of American education, unlike some European educations, which in my opinion emphasize general knowledge and a general sort of Renaissance view of not knowing only your subject, but also the arts and literature and music and something of a-at least basic something. This does not necessarily hold in this country. And it's perfectly possible to be a brilliant lawyer and have absolutely – if – if you were asked to name three American sculptors, they couldn't do it. Which is astonishing, you know? There have been some wonderful ones. But I mean, ap – quite apart from that, perhaps the size of the country is counterproductive to this kind of thinking because if you ask me to name an artist from every of the 50 states, I probably would have a very



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hard time, because well, because I – and – and you see, there are layers of knowledge. There are people who know a lot about a subject, there are people who know a li – a bit ab – some, and there are people who know a little and then there are people who know nothing. And it's perfectly possible to be prominent in one field in this country and know nothing about the others. It's a bit shocking, but then there are many shocking things like that, culturally. I – I – one of my favorite examples since I was in **Japan** a few years ago is tell me somebody who knows anything – anything about Japanese culture, who learned it in school. Thi – anything besides “**Shogun**” and “**Madame Butterfly**.” Anything about the background of an ancient culture, you see? And we don't learn it in school, I guess it's assumed. I mean, unless you're a specialist, because perhaps it's assumed that there is so much knowledge out there that you can't know it all. Computers can change that a bit now, because you can, if you're at all interested, you can look it up in the internet and it's pro – no doubt in there. And I wonder to what extent that will spread a degree o-o-of feeling, of general knowledge? Now, when – if we don't have a president one day who really cares about the arts, beyond the **Kennedy** Center Awards, do you think that – that the arts will flourish all by themselves a-as congress encourages sponsored by corporations, rather than by the endowment and so on? This is a very tricky subject, you see? It da – it – some of it isn't going to happen. And if you look back, historically, whether we have had any

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arts in – in top positions; there's **Thomas Jefferson**, who was in his own right, an inventive, creative mind that I think overlapped into the arts and certainly into architecture. What he did at **Monticello** and at the university i-is – is admirable.

Can you think of any other ones? You see, you – I probably don't know enough about some of the intervening ones, but – but certainly, I mean – okay,

**Rockefeller** was an art collector and he was vice-president. Whether he collected – I don't know his motivations. **Mondale's** wife was into ceramics, all right?

**Jackie** was into – int – into interior decoration, all right? But – but going backwards, do you think that **Carter, Bush, Reagan?** Well, into movies.

**Eisenhower, Kennedy?** Blank. You see, I mean, an interest – **Humphrey** was very interested in photography. We did a big photo exhibits when I was in the poetry program that he prompted. And it was lovely. I took him through it and it was marvelous how perceptive he was. But you see, we are not going to elect an artist or even an art collector president, it – as it stands. And then th – and I think that it would take a strong hand to do something to – i-i-in fact, let me backtrack that [**indecipherable**]. It is marvelous that we are doing as well as we are, because the point – the center point of the arts has actually shifted to this country from – from **Europe**, from **Paris** to **New York** and perhaps **Los Angeles**, I don't know. **Chicago**. And – and we are doing amazingly well considering that – that what I just said holds true. And when I applied for my **Fulbright** you may recall, my

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principal, a Scots painter said they are in their Elizabethan age in the **United States**, artistically, culturally. Meaning the first **Elizabeth**, right? So, we are doing remarkably well, we could be doing much better still, with more encouragement, with less sort of redneck small town attitudes about the arts being on the border of something questionable, and sinful and not quite reputable. Which is what we are seeing every time the endowment happens to – to endorse, or not even endorse, but – but gets marginally involved with a grant that is then used for something that is appalling and shocking. And of course, that's the chance you take, to some extent. You can't pre-examine and sense everything you award, and some of them are going to misfire. So, we get some demonstrative art that's a bit beyond the pale when people shoot themselves in – in – in – in the toes in order to – yeah, there was some man who – who considered that demonstrative art, he actually shot holes into himself on the stage, or the other one kicked herself in chocolate in the nude, and so on, and this is performance art, you see, but th – there is much in art that is shocking if it is new. Some of it is bad. Well, if you want some good, there's also going to be some bad, th-there has to be freedom. Now, perhaps one can control that a little bit, but the attempts have been made to go by local standards only. Well, there are some **Noguchi** sculptures in **Seattle** that the government, General Services Administration under its arts in – in government buildings program put in, and a local congressman protested that these were pet

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rocks, because **Noguchi** takes a stone and works it minimally, but very, very beautifully. My judgment okay, but not only mine. And he thought that this was meaningless, and a waste. And a **Sugarman** sculpture in a court in **Baltimore** was hated by the judge and the judge rules his court like a-an autocratic ruler. And he said it was dangerous because it offered hiding places for muggers who would waylay the secretaries when they came from work in the evening. Well, I mean, these are pretty farfetched criticisms. He just didn't like that sculpture, you know. And maybe it was not a nice sculpture, I mean, a-are you going to love all sculptures equally? I heard scathing criticism of the **Roosevelt** Memorial. And then I – and I haven't seen it yet. And I looked at a brochure about it, and the artists who were involved, like **Baskin** and **Segal** and – and **Benton**, who is the carver of the letters, are top notch people. So it can't be all bad. Oh, I didn't continue that I said – well, in '84, in '84 I retired and I took my early retirement and – and made a rousing farewell speech where I told them all what was wrong with government and with the General Services min – Administration in particular and it made people blanch, but I really loved the opportunity to use the commando spirit and – in at least telling them how it was, which was pretty much off the rails by that time and I was glad to – to get out. And I freelanced and I started to work on my book. I freelanced and my daughter **Anne** is in the same – she has design studio, of course, it's high tech. She has two **Macintosh** and she does stuff on the

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computer. But there are things that I – I maintain, I'm not sure she would agree, that I can do that the computer can't. And so we work together and she does the technological stuff and she has very good ideas, but they work better when we brainstorm together. And we do that by phone and in person, and – and the last conversation was this morning, on th – a project she is working on. And we come up with – with very nice solutions together.

Q: I also wanted to follow up on something that you had mentioned before with respect to an article printed in **B'nai B'rith**, in the **B'nai B'rith** magazine. You had told me you wanted to elaborate on that.

A: **Paula Ammon**(ph) wrote an article in the **B'nai B'rith** monthly magazine called what, "**Jewish Monthly**," I think? And it's an international magazine. And they sent a photographer out whose – whose name I'd have to look up, but he is brilliant, because he actually took a picture of me that I like, and that's hard to do. He took a lot of pictures and they used one, and it shows that even as a septuagenarian first time author, you don't have to look like a decrepit old man. He – and she wrote a very nice article. There were a couple of errors. One she didn't do herself, because somebody else writes the table of content at the front of the magazine. And in that table of content, they – this person wrote that I had served in **Normandy** and **Salerno**. And I was nowhere near **Salerno**. But some of our people were. My friend **Stefan**(ph) **Rosskum**(ph) who served as **Steve Ross**

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was in **Salerno** and I think the judge who is now retired, with whom I am debating the inscription on the monument was in **Salerno**, and – and they were in **Anzio** and in **Salerno**, and then in the river crossings in the Italian campaign, the **Carilliano**(ph), the **Isonzo** and so on, before we landed on **D-Day**. But I was not in **Salerno**. Secondly, the second mistake is much worse, it says that when I went to art school in **London** after my military service, I wanted to get into the **Central School of Art and Design**, because I had heard that it will – because it was so anti-Semitic that it was hard to get in. That is totally untrue. She got that fir-first because I – I said that I had been told it was a very competitive school and it was hard to get in, not a word of anti-Semitism is true. I made up my mind that I would get into the school because it was competitive and it was going to be difficult to get accepted. I felt that I had perhaps an unfair advantage because I was still in uniform, and if you come to apply to a school after six years of war in a commando uniform with parachute wings and your medal ribbons, the chances are they're gonna let you in if your work isn't terribly bad, I guess my work was not that terribly bad, although I remember sitting in a life class and the very prominent painter who taught that life class looked over my shoulder and said, how many times a week are you taking life class? And I said, three times a week. And he said, make that five. A sobering experience. So, and it says then, with – with typical chutzpah I became president of the students union. Well, the person who

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told me it was hard to get into the school in the first place was a young woman who had just graduated, and she boasted that she had been president of the student union, she was a refugee. And so I decided that I would get into the school and become president of the student union, and I did. So that was not with typical chutzpah, but I said, with the drive of an ex-commando, I did – I became president of the student union.

Q: I've asked you about your personal life, and I've asked you about your professional life, and I've asked you about social events in this country in the years that you've lived here, but I haven't asked you about contemporary Jewish history. If you would take a moment and reflect on – on the birth of the state of **Israel**. You've talked about that before, but things since the birth of **Israel**, the **Eichmann** trial, and **Israel's** wars. As a refugee now living in this country, how have those events impacted you?

A: Well, I'm – I'm not sure I told you the story that after the war, there were annual memorial services at **Westminster**, and when people came out of the – I'm not sure if it's **Westminster** Cathedral or **Westminster** Abbey, because I think I've been to one. I'm told there were people recruiting. I da – I told you that story, that they were recruiting for the – for the Arabs and – and for the Israelis because they wanted train the sol – soldiers. Well, the Israeli – the Israeli military effort appeared to me to be a continuation of this thing that I was about, the – the striking

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back mentality. And if anything, they underscored what I was trying to demonstrate, because when I was a high school kid in **Vienna**, the notion that Jews would fight meaningful, strategic – no, meaningful military assault actions seemed very farfetched. The pictures the Nazi tried to create was that Jews were persons that sought desk jobs in – in – in – or – and were over intellectualized and physically incapable of any actions such as the one required in – such actions as the Israelis demonstrated they were extremely capable of doing, and we too, in our way, demonstrated that we were able to do that sort of thing and do it well. It hadn't really occurred to the world, and I find that – that Jews could do an **Entebbe** raid, or fight off a vast armored superiority with mainly the spirit and – and enthusiasm and ingenuity of a dedicated people. So all this was very important to me, and it had not really – well, i-it was novel, and it was bright and shiny. And I think it was wonderful that these things – that – that – that we were gathering respect. At times I was appalled at the attempted turnaround of making that this was comparable to the militarists on the enemy's side. In other words that mean-spirited critics would say that the Israeli actions were Nazism in the Middle East. I think that that is a partisan point of view, that I-I find very hard to stomach. And again, I have friends who are much more knowledgeable about the details of some of these Israeli actions, and who when criticized for the politics, which of course is – is – is a – a – a popular pastime anyway, point out the geography. And I've been



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to **Israel** once, and I stood on the **Golan Heights**, and I – I said, if it were mine, I wouldn't give it up, because it means that they can do – aim shooting into the kibbutz on the other slope, and I obviously would have to prevent that from happening. Much of this is outdated now because if the warfare is by rocket and missile, it doesn't matter whether you do observed shooting or not. Nevertheless, the narrow waist of **Israel** is so – is so narrow that you find that to give up territory that would make it narrower still, is not the kind of thing you want to do easily and without some guarantees that are meaningful.

Q: I have heard you talk about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. You had spoken on several occasions and even in your book about Jewish resistance. And I'd like you to comment.

A: About Jewish resistance I've had some lively de-debates, mostly by letter with the Holocaust Museum people, because I feel that we who, as refugees, volunteered for special and hazardous duty and put our lives on the line, that this is unlike somebody joining the armed forces and serving at the Pentagon. It seems to me – especially if you judge it by its ultimate results. It's true that people were killed in all kinds of units here and there, but many of us were killed. Twenty of 86 were killed. And almost all were wounded and some of the wounds were by no means minor, a lost eye, a lost leg, things from which they subsequently, years later, became invalids and died. I – I think the fact that a – a refugee who is, by

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definition a person who escaped, who – who either went into hiding and escaped or managed to escape when it was still possible to do so without pretense, usually penniless, did not sit back and say, we've suffered enough and let somebody else do it, but volunteered and volunteered and volunteered and overcame all the difficulties that it took me and my friends to be allowed to volunteer for risky things. I say we are resistance, and they say this – by resistance we define the people in the forests of **Vilna**, or the people who, in the **Warsaw** uprising, and I certainly agree that they were resistance, and I would define it by saying they were resistance of desperation, because if you are in their situation in the **Warsaw** ghetto, if you are in their situation hiding in the forests and trying to – to do damage to the enemy, y-y-you – you ar – this is a – a desperation move. If you questioned and interviewed them as I am being interviewed now, they would say, the ideal thing for us would have been to get out if we could, if only we could. To get equipped and trained, trained and equipped, and then to come back with the maximum effectiveness of the well-trained, well-equipped person. I don't really want to quibble about this indefinitely, because if they don't call us resistance, okay. I think we were resistance, that's all. I think we did what we could to resist and – and were willing to take risks and volunteer and volunteer and volunteer. And volunteer on top of volunteering for special assignments. So that gave us immense satisfaction, insofar as we survived it, and I would say even insofar as we

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didn't, it was a comforting thought to those who lay dying that they had done it in  
luc – that they were there because they wanted to be.

Q: On a related subject, I wanted to ask you about something you said in the  
interview that you did for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.  
You mentioned what you called reaction beyond reflex, and you talked about  
knowing that sometimes a person needs to take action. I was wondering if you  
could expand on that, since this is a follow-up to that interview.

A: I – I'm not – I'm not sure there is very much to expand, but it works like this,  
and it's a wartime thing. You have a feeling, at times, in – in situations that might  
be desperate or – or dangerous, or whatever, that somebody has to take some  
action that is required to resolve the situation. And you have the fi – th – and the  
follow-up feeling of that feeling is, in my experience, that you find – and if I  
don't, perhaps nobody will take the necessary action. That therefore you – you –  
you realize – and this doesn't – isn't a lengthy process, you suddenly realize  
somebody must do something and must do it now and nobody seems to be doing  
it, so I better. So you do it. And you do it swiftly and with determination and you  
have decided to do it and so you do it. And this is true in a great many things and  
has its application by an extension to – to non-wartime situations where the feeling  
is, somebody must do something, and – and – and what – what – what can I do?  
And i-i – perhaps it's entirely up to me. Sometimes with some of my best

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commando friends, I found that as I was thinking somebody must do something, they were already doing it, because they had a similar mindset. But not everybody does, and I think that to – to take a long bridge to some of our political problems at the moment, I heard somebody ask not long ago, where is the person who is taking the kind of action that was taken by an **Ed Murrow** in the **McCarthy** situation, by speaking out with authority and saying, this has to stop. Or a – a – a – **Welsh** in the **McCarthy** hearings when he said, sir, have you no shame, to Senator **McCarthy**. I feel that the speaking out, and s – I mean, surely an authority def – an authority figure should stand up and say, enough already. Surely. I understand what this is all about, I understand that – that – and I have my own partisan view of it, wh-which – which is irrelevant. I-It seems to me that it ought to be possible to rise about the partisan thing when the damage done to our daily lives, the – the mere fatigue of – of listening to the ongoing argument about the various options of, and what disasters each one of them will bring upon us, surely gets you to f – a point where you say, enough already. I – I can't – I can't get over the way the – the – the media makes news.

Q: I'm gonna pause for just a minute. You're making reference to things that are happening tod – you know, today, in the contemporary time.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you have not mentioned what exactly it is that you're referring to.

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A: Okay. I'm talking about the – the comparisons of the present – what – what the media called a White House in crisis, or the presidency in crisis and comparing it to the **Nixon Watergate** situation, which I think is an outrageous comparison. And to say that, as I heard yesterday on television, this was o-only about a minor burglary, the **Watergate**, and I say, it was about a minor burglary that affected the democratic process, the political party of the opposition and that there is absolutely no comparison to a sex scandal.

Q: I'm sorry, we have to pause to change tape. **[break]** – continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** volunteer collection interview with **Peter Masters**. This is tape five, side **B**. We were talking about comparing the **Watergate** crisis and the contemporary crisis that **Clinton** is having, and you had mentioned about the media making the news. I would also like to – to ask you to comment on – on the differences that you see in the coverage of the White House ru – when you were working with **CBS** news –

A: Mm.

Q: – in the 60s, and you were in the White House with **Kennedy**, and today.

A: Well, when **Kennedy** was in the White House, I heard from inside people who had worked there, I think the f – the thing was that – the phrase, if I remember it rightly was a man telling me, well you know he has this thing about airline stewardesses. And I thought – I – I had no idea what you were talking about and

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then they spelled it out to me about the swimming pool adventures of **Kennedy**. And you see, that – at that time, this sort of thing was going on, but traditionally not talked about except in – in – in stage whispers, and entirely separate from all other considerations. Now, I-I can see how any moralist person would object to the details of – of – of the sexual adventures of the present president. I – I – I think that it is of course true, that if I described you – to you any sexual activity by anybody in detail, it would sound shocking, simply because we are not used to seeing this sort of thing in print, except – I mean, the beginning – le-let me backtrack there. When **D.H. Lawrence** wrote – wrote “**Lady Chatterley’s Lover**” where he first called – u-used the expressive language for a sexual activity, that was banned and considered shocking. It was the first time it had really happened by a major author. **James Joyce** describes oral sex in considerable detail. The sug – but it’s not customary in the average novel or – or history to go into detailed descriptions, largely because the hint of **Hollywood** before overt sex on the screen, the hint is more powerful than the spelling out. It has more – more – i-i-it’s in – it’s more tasteful, it’s – it-it’s more genteel. That caused some authors to go deliberately the other way and write it very bluntly. **Miller**, not **Arthur**, but th – “**Tropic of Cancer**,” if you recall, made it very, very – spelled out sex references. Personally I’m not shocked by anything, I think it’s in pretty poor taste. And the best criticism I have found, the one that strikes me the most

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meaningful is the one that a president should – knowing that in today's scenario this will come back at him and be publicized all over the place, takes what is a – a very reckless risk in – in doing it. And – and that is, to me, the main criticism. The fact that he did it doesn't interest me at all. People do all kinds of things, some are more kinky than others. But you see, there is another current in the present thing and that is, to many patriotic and religious Americans, the Oval Office is somewhat comparable to the holiest of holy in the temple, and – before its destruction. And so, if anything happened – like that happens in the Oval Office, which was presumably the ambition of this young woman, so that she would have her place in history, sh-she – th-the thing is that this is in and of itself appalling, because it was – it desecrated the holiest of holy in the temple of the White House.

Q: You mentioned a few moments ago on the – the end of the last tape, about how the media makes the news. And I'd like you to comment on how that has changed from – from your earlier experience with – with **CBS** news and then freelancing for the other stations.

A: Well, what can I say? **Ed Murrow**, **Eric Sevareid**, where are you now? You see, would – even – even taking the best of the best of the present, there isn't really anybody who could hold a candle, to use a cliché, to any – to – to – to those two men, who were serious, responsible reporters. Now, we get multiple speculation. One of my pet aversions at the moment, by the way, is the talking

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heads, when – and – and the only credit you have to explain who they are, is a former prosecutor. It's a favorite choice. There are lots of former prosecutors, of all – of all shades, you see? Now, I think – and I've seriously considered to – to try and communicate that wish to the media, they ought to be compelled to say – to give a – an extra s – a – a-a subtitle under former prosecutor and saying, a former prosecutor, a political appointee appointed by **Richard Nixon**, for instance.

Because then you would understand – I mean, I understand where they come from by what they say anyway, but I think there are lots of people out there who say ah, a former prosecutor. Must be a legally well-informed person, you see. And some of them were shallow political appointees, ultra-partisan appointees and the least you could do is say, who put them there to be a former prosecutor, so that we – everybody can understand th – and anticipate what they are going to say. Now, if what they are going to say is a partisan line, that they tell you. And then they'll say – they'll anticipate what might be done to counteract that. And they will say, the f – the following options, and so wa – in any case they will exhaust and dismantle any option before it has even been dreamt of by anybody. And now there is nothing new you are going to hear, but you are going to hear again and again and again that this was a minor burglary, and this is not a case of sex, but a case of profound obstruction of justice. And to – to me, I would even suggest that all these lawyers get together and say that perjury in cases of denying sexual activity should



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be discounted as ca – as perjury. Because, it's an automatic reflex. If you ask somebody – it's like the question, when did you last beat your wife? It's a question, when did you last have an extramarital affair? Gee, I never had an extramarital affair, okay? This is a reflex by people, and their – is that perjurious if – if you say, I – I'm – I mean, a per – it took a President **Carter** to say, I only lusted in my heart. Some of them go beyond lusting in their heart.

Q: I have just one or two final questions for you. First of all, I want to ask you, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you want to mention before we conclude?

A: We had perhaps mentioned a couple of things. Offhand I can't think of any. I – I think that – I'm sure we'll remember afterwards what we – I should have spoken less of, and what I should have spoken more of, but there it is.

Q: What have been your most significant accomplishments?

A: Whose accomplishments?

Q: Yours. Your most significant.

A: Ha. Well, I don't know that I would call them accomplishments, I – I've always pointed to my apparently continuing streak of luck in – in many of the things I've undertaken. Accomplish, it's – is it an accomplishment to have gotten out of – out from under the Nazis? Is it an accomplishment to have continued a life in which I was able to strike back at the Nazis? All these are accomplishments, if you want to

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call them that, that I relish, but I – I think they're sort of automatic. It's the sort of thing I felt I had to do. And that applies to everything. It applies to my struggling and typing a book with two fingers, sometimes three, to – and – and getting it done. It applies to – to all these things which I don't consider accomplishments, but as – as we said before, when you feel you have to do it because – I mean, maybe another one of my colleagues had written a book. And some of them actually did, I think, for their own family accounts and so on. But I thought the important thing was not to tell my family, per se, the important thing was to get the word out that this existed, and that it did happen. So that was an accomplishment if you will, but I don't know, I – it's – I would substitute the phrase, it was something I had to do, rather than saying it's an accomplishment.

Q: Along that same line, what do you feel you have yet to do – that you yet have to do?

A: Well, what do I have to do? I'm aware by simple arithmetic that I will not see my grandchildren accomplish the things I'd love to see them accomplish. So I tried to influence them by telling them a lot of stories. As you know, I'm prone to do that. And I've just written a birthday poem for my 11 year old grandson, in which I urge him to become a Renaissance man. And I'm si – when I told him that in person the other day, because his – he – he tends to have a – at present a one track interest in fishing and – and – fly fishing. He gets very sophisticated about

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how and what, and he knows the name of every fish that ever swam in the water, which I think is very fine. But I say there is even more to the world than – than – than fish, and the great thing is to strive to become a Renaissance man, and then relax with his fishing rod, and think about the great things that he has learned in other subjects. So, if I could guarantee that I can g – influence my grandchildren to lead meaningful lives, that would satisfy me no end.

Q: I would like to thank you very much for spending so very much time with me to do this interview. And this now concludes the united – **[break]**

**Conclusion of Interview**