United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Gunnar Sonsteby
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Gunnar Sonsteby, conducted on February 9, 2000 in Washington, DC on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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GUNNAR SONSTEBY
February 9, 2000

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Mr. Sonsteby, it's nice to have you here in Washington with us.

Answer: It's very nice to meet you.

Q: Tell me, what was your name at birth?

A: My name at birth was Gunnar Sonsteby, Gunnar Fridtjof Thurmann Sonsteby

[indecipherable]

Q: And you were born what -- what year and what day?

A: 1918.

Q: And the month?

A: January.

Q: The day?

A: The day was 11th.

Q: January 11th. And where were you born?

A: In Rjukan, a small place in Telemark. And it's pronounced Rjukan, it's written Rjukan, but I was born there in 1918, and I stayed there for about 18 - 19 years, had my school there, and I -- then I went to the university in Oslo after that time.

Q: Tel -- tell me about your family, your mother and your father. What did your father do?

A: My father was a worker in a hydroelectric plant in Rjukan. My -- my mother, she was a very energetic woman, so she started a -- a little sewing thing. She was a very clever, so she put up a little business because my father's salary wasn't too big. He was there for -- he had been there, came from Oslo because most people came into Rjukan from different towns in Norway, or

Sweden, or England, or Germany. Could come from many places, so it's the only place in Norway where you have no dialect, none at all. People in Norway are not aware of this, so now I'll tell them.

Q: No dialect at all?

A: Not at all, so I speak in Norwegian, I speak an Oslo dialect. They -- and when I was interviewed with my program, [indecipherable] said, "Oh I'm looking forward to hear your dialect." "Well, I'm sorry, I haven't got any dialect," I said.

Q: So is this the only place in Norway where it's a sort of -- is it -- would you call it a kind of pure --

A: I -- I think so.

Q: -- nor -- Norwegian.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's interesting.

A: It came from everywhere, and then they had a common language.

Q: And did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I had a sister, little older, tis -- very good, you know, to be taken care of, an older sister even better than mother sometimes.

Q: So were you close with your sister?

A: Very, very close.

Q: So what was it like to grow up in 1918, after 1918, in -- in your town?

A: We were very lucky because Rjukan, the people that started up industry there, they were very foreseeing. They put up an -- think that some of the workers living quarters is today occur -- even today look like salaried people [indecipherable]. It was very good, from the very beginning.

So we were very lucky, and we had free schools. It was just -- books and everything was free. So it was extremely well done from that --

Q: Now, is that unusual in Norway that the schools were free?

A: Well, at that time it was unusual all over the world. So they were very ahead, I must say. The hydro, it's -- it was shortened to hydro, hydroelectric company, but hydro, and I think they had a wonderful personnel department, wonderful.

Q: What did you like in school? Did you like school?

A: I was lucky in way -- later on, you know, I needed to be an average looking fellow, and I was also, when I had speeches in schools, they say I was also average in schools, and the peop -- the people that liked to hear that, average in everything, also in school.

Q: Did you like school?

A: I liked history.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And math, not too bad.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: [indecipherable] was -- we were -- we were always -- when we were not in school, we were in the mountains, so it was very important to -- to have that role the [indecipherable] physical activities.

Q: Were you a skier?

A: Yes. We had to be, when we were in the mountains.

Q: Right.

A: At those times, it was always snow enough. Today it's sometimes scarce.

Q: Were you close with your parents?

A: Yes, I would think so. I am -- when I left, 18 years old, to go into military service, and to university later on, was a little strange, especially for my parents, of course, and my sister. But to me it was future.

Q: And your sister remained in -- in town.

A: Yes, they -- she remained there, and married to one of the people in the hydro again, they were all there, and he was later on taking care of personnel.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: My brother-in-law.

Q: Uh-huh. Were your parents politically con -- active, and --

A: Yes. Not -- not active, but they had their opinions, and -- but it was not very radical, because they belonged -- as a worker he belonged to the Labor party, but wasn't very active. He was [indecipherable] and then he was trying to become a sculptor. So he was very interested in books and all that. So sh -- he should really had gone on the sculptor way.

Q: Your father?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So, I always felt that. But he was very fond of books. So in 1935, he came with a book to me, and I was there sixt -- roughly s -- six -- almost --

Q: 17.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And he came with a book written by a German called Wolfgang Langhoff. That was, in German, Moorsoldaten, it means Moor soldiers. It was from a concentration camp in Germany,

the first one. And that book opened my eyes for Nazism. And my father came to me with it, he said, “Read it. You understand a little more.” And then -- from then on, I was an anti-Nazi. When I was in s -- the second grade, it were col -- a kind of college, then we had the discussion always in the class, it was 28 people in our class, was -- four were very hard against Nazism, but -- and the others were, of course, not Naziists at all. But they said Hitler is -- everyone has a job there. Roads best in Europe, so -- so what. But if you had been through that book from Oranienburg, when they built up right at the station there -- later on it was moved a little, the concentration camps were moved a little, but at that time it was right in Oranienburg. I think it’s -- was the first in Germany, in ’33. They say maybe -- they mention another place too, but I think it was the first, and I think I’m right in that. And he got away in -- so he could --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- flee to Switzerland, and he wrote the book immediately. It was very important that we knew more about it, and h-he -- he more or less described it so what help -- was later, that we saw later.

Q: Did you discuss the book with your father?

A: Oh, very much. No, I didn’t need to discuss it in that way because he said, you read it, so you know a little more about this. So when -- that -- we discussed it in school, but most people un -- was another thing, the German propaganda came to Norway already at that time. In 1936, before the Olympics, th-the terrible propaganda, you know? They had more -- they had sent out young boys from Germany into Norwegian schools, that were called wunder -- in German wunderfagrin. And they had been educated, they were just 19 - 20, they were educated in German propaganda. They were going into schools, and who knew that? They thought they were

very nice to have German, young Germans here. But they were all specially trained people, right -- put right into schools in Norway.

Q: So was the government of Norway in some way sympathetic that they allowed this, or they --

A: No, they didn't -- no --

Q: No.

A: -- they were no sympathetic, they just didn't -- we didn't understand it. We were fooled, already that -- at that time, by the Gestapo methods, and the propaganda machinery, you know?

Q: But you in some sense understood because you read the book, so did you say things to these people when they came into your class? Did you ask them?

A: Oh yes, we discussed it, and we -- we were -- hard discussions between us. But it was talking -- to some people it was just im -- they just wouldn't understand. Was very difficult.

Q: So as it got closer to when the Nazis took over, you -- you finished high s -- is it high school gymnasium?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: And -- and when? In 1937 - '38?

A: Yes, was all -- in '38, and I -- from 1939 - '40, I was in the u -- at the University of Oslo.

Q: In Oslo.

A: So now I studied economics.

Q: And wha --

A: And at the same time, of course, I had a job. But at that time you would not -- I could -- my parent couldn't pay any education, so I started as an accountant. I was trying to become a chartered accountant, which was [indecipherable] and at the same time I studied economics. So when the war came in ninth April, '40, I was writing it.

Q: You were writing your thesis?

A: Yeah, in my education.

Q: Why was it economics? Why were you want to -- want to do economics?

A: Well, I -- I thought -- I liked it in a way, and I -- I thought the combination of chartered accountant and economics would do as a good future, give you a good future.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Interesting future.

Q: Did -- did you have a sense that Germany would attack Norway?

A: Not at all.

Q: None?

A: Oh no, didn't believe it, it couldn't be done, and so -- so was the rest of Europe. France? They didn't believe that the Germans would attack. And the same with the British, you know, Chamberlain? Peace in our time.

Q: Right.

A: Lasted a few months.

Q: So there was no warning. You had no -- when they --

A: No, it -- it wasn't, but of course the -- how they treated Germans in general, the very brutal dictatorship, we heard about that, and we thought it was terrible. And of course, we heard about the Jews that were -- but nobody could really believe what later came.

Q: So what was it like when the Germans occupied? What was -- what were those first few week --

A: Was a shock to all Norway. And then -- but you know, Hitler sent an ambassador to Norway, called Dr. Bräuer, and he came with a ultimatum, and that said, he came up to the

[indecipherable] in the morning, ninth April, 4:30 in the morning. And then he said, it's an ultimatum. You give in or we start war. And the government, I think they withdrew for about quarter of an hour, they came back, we take the war. So then it was on. And it had almost start -- it had started a little before, because Germans sent in -- the Hitler's pride was a very big warship, and that ship was stopped, it came almost into Oslo, then it was stopped by [indecipherable] fortress, fortress just before Oslo, near -- near the town of Jerbok, and that big ship was hit by -- they had some big guns there, German guns, by the way. And that ship was sank. That ship had 2400 people on board, and they had an orchestra, because [indecipherable] going into Oslo, to take Oslo in the morning. And it was sank at the place there, that fortress. And then the king -- the government and part of our congress people or parliament, they could get out to Oslo, because that's -- ship. They had 800 specially trained troops to take over -- to take the government, arrest them in the morning. But they didn't have the chance, so the government, the -- the king of course, and the family, and part or most of Parliament members came out to Oslo. I could -- they were saved, so they could meet outside Oslo to discuss the situation. So they had -- they got a little time. If not, they would have been taken in Oslo for 4:30, five o'clock in the morning, they would all be arrested, and then we had, of course, it had been [indecipherable] fighting for the government. Now they could get out, king, and then later on, we fought for about two months, Norway, and then the government, they went on fighting in England. And one thing what was very important to see, we had -- at that time, you wouldn't believe it, but we had the third biggest merchant fleet in the world. We had the biggest tanker fleet in the world. Three million people. It was enormous. And the -- all the ships were out, on the world. Out in the world. And it was only five ships in Norway. And then -- then the war came and the government came to England. They sent out the telegram to all ships, and they said, we are now at war. You

have to go into allied harbors, New York, London, and they all did. And then we put up a shipping company, the biggest shipping company the world has ever seen. Was thou -- thousand ships, and it -- you will never see that shipping company again. It was the world biggest, it was incredible. And of course, then the government had money. Now they could build up this small fleet, the Navy, they could build up a small Air Force in Canada. And they could up -- put up some specially trained paratroopers, for all the time, that could go into Norway and start fighting there, behind the enemy lines.

Q: S-So the -- the king and the crown prince, and the family and part of the government went to London?

A: Yes.

Q: And stayed?

A: They came over there, and the family, royal family came over to America, luckily. And that was Crown Princess Märtha and her children, three children, one of them was -- is King Harald today in Norway, and they stayed in Washington there, and they were taken good care of by President Roosevelt and his wife. They were very close to them, all the time.

Q: Now, did you know this as you were in Oslo, that you -- you -- you knew that the family --

A: Yes.

Q: -- excuse me -- the royal family had left?

A: Yes. And we knew that part of the family, the -- the children and the wife of the crown prince, they came out to the last ship from Finland. By the way, it -- what was an American ship that took them out, over Petcimal in Finland. They got out to the States that way.

Q: I see. So they went from Norway to Finland.

A: To -- right to America --

Q: I see.

A: And the royal fam -- the king and the crown prince, they ca -- came over to England and started there. And now the crown prince was later on commander in chief for the Norwegian part in England. They had to put up a ministry there, and -- within -- within the government, and they were leading i -- our troops there, Navy, and so on.

Q: So what happened to you? School stops, or doesn't stop? What happens?

A: I was in the insurance company, having a job there as a assistant accountant. And then I went into the office manager and I said, I'm sorry, but I have to go into the war, can I have free? Can you give me a -- so, it's incredible, isn't it? And he -- he just said, so, get out, get going, it's time. But I thought I had to tell him, ask him if I had the admission. So I went -- then I went over and into the woods, north of Oslo, and joined a skiing company, with a friend of mine. So --

Q: And you were going to try to meet the military in the north?

A: Yeah, so that -- and next day I was fighting with the German troops coming from -- they had been then -- some of them landed in Oslo at the airport, and then they came north, and we met them there, and we stopped them for about a good period, a day or two, but we had guns, we had rifles only. They had artillery, they had tanks, and they had all kinds of weapons which we -- you know, it was the strongest army in the world, you know, so --

Q: Yeah. Right.

A: But we kept going two months. You know, France fell in 14 days. So I think we did okay, expect what we could expect from us.

Q: Now, had you been trained with guns?

A: Well, I had a very little training in the King's Guard. But we had -- it's really interesting this is not so well known in Norway. We had the volunteering, military service among the students.

We put up that before the war. So in the -- li -- late ’39, just beginning 1940, we had the voluntary -- volunteers training there. So that was -- so you may have thought something could happen. So we were right.

Q: And who started that, students started that?

A: That was one of my friends, he was a student leader, Knut Moyen, he started that. And later on he became one of the leaders in a sec -- when we started building up small secret groups, military groups.

Q: And were there boys and girls in this or only boys?

A: No, at that time it was only boys, but of course girls in -- in the resistance movement, when we should go for instance, into Oslo to look after what had happened [indecipherable] we used our girlfriends --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- because the -- they were not suspected, see? But th-they did fine job. Also, all the -- was girls in resistance movement did a wonderful job.

Q: So after Norway falls, after two months, where -- where are you? Have you -- have you met the -- the military in the north, or you never got there?

A: Well, our -- we -- our skiing company fought for about three weeks in southern Norway, then we had to give in, and I went back to Oslo. And then already some [indecipherable] I got the very bad pneumonia, but I got through it and the same month, more or less, July 1940, I met with some friends at the student’s hut, out in the wilderness, north of Oslo. We started immediately think, what are we going to do? What can we do? It’s now two -- 200,000 Germans here. Where can we start? But we thought we will start slowly, building up small groups. Maybe could be an invasion, and we hope for that. And -- but one thing was what -- very important, it was all

rumors. The papers were censored, all the newspapers. Radios taken, so now it was all rumors. Anybody. It was rumors, rumors. So we thought you have to do something with this, you have to inform people. So then we started secret newspapers. It was about 350 newspapers in Oslo at that time, and I think it came up about at least so many secret newspapers, not with that circulation of course, but one of the newspaper had the circulation of 25,000. The newspaper what was that, we had -- the Norwegian [indecipherable] had put up a -- with BBC, the Norwegian broadcast to Norway, every evening, 7:30. And then these peop -- the news was taken down, that was news from the free world. It was no propaganda, it was -- we had got all the news from the free world. And they were put down, and they were magnified -- I mean, they were copied, and then you could have a sheet of paper, you could have 15, and you spread it round, very often where you were working, at your -- it was spread, and then the Germans propaganda and anti-propaganda was -- for them it was the worst thing. So Gestapo, it was the most terrible thing when -- if you are taken with the -- call it the clandestine newspaper, secretive, you would be arrested, and you could easily be shot. Or you were put into concentration camps. I think about 20,000 did this during the war, 5,000 are taken into custody, concentration camp, many, many died. And over 200 Norwegian journalists -- call it journalist, they were shot, why? Because they fought Nazism with pencil and paper. And they were shot, 200 of them are shot during the war, we hear about now. So it was just incredible how the -- and it was two things that -- that Gestapo was after, but I had a real Gestapo force in Norway, secret police, security police, they were after people doing these newspapers, and building up small military groups. And of course they were after other groups, and later on, of course, the Jews, which we -- which we couldn't -- didn't understand. We couldn't expect it at all, you know. They were Norwegians, they -- to me it was Norwegians,

they had Norwegian passport, they lived in Norway, had -- they were born there. That we couldn't believe at all.

Q: So let's talk about these newspapers. Ha -- about how many different clandestine newspapers do you think there might have been during this period?

A: I think it might have been 350.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. All over Norway. About the same as we had before, but of course not with that circulation. It's just natural.

Q: And they were distributed what, individually, you would pass them out to people?

A: Yes, for instance, when you had copied, let's say 50, you had other coming, fetching them, and of course we also used schoolchildren to distribute them. Could be old people, young people and schoolchildren, girls and boys. They were spread. But when they were grown up, they were taken and of course when you had 20 people [indecipherable] you, it was seen by some traitors, some informers, they would inform on you. They had put up the same as they had in Germany. Security police and informers. You know, in any nation you would have one to two percent which are traitors to your country. And now they found them, and they were taken -- they had the -- they were about 4,000 in Oslo. In -- over the two, three years, we had 4,000 informers. And when they saw man with the paper, they informed it to the Gestapo, and that man was tortured. And of course, he had been to a place getting it, and that was -- of course he -- you cannot stand the torture, it's impossible with the torture. They came to Norway with Middle Age torture. Middle Age torture, which I had read about, it i -- was history, and now they came into open with the Norwegian -- with the security police and they -- then they also organized, or reorganized Norwegian police. So they had about, I should say, 20 percent of them got taken into a new state,

it was federal police, state police, and they were just teached -- taught by the Gestapo, so they were as good as any German Gestapo, any German security officer. So it was a very -- if you were in that, call it that trade, newspaper distribution, you would have a good chance to be arrested, tortured and killed. Was a very great risk. We all -- they all knew.

Q: But it was e-equally as risky to take the newspaper and be seen with it, as it was to deliver it, I gather?

A: Oh yes, oh yes. Then they would arrest you, they would torture you and say where did you get it from? Where -- where did you get it from? And, of course, they couldn't stand it, and they -- then they were arrested, others were arrested. But it all the time they kept -- kept on, it was more and more newspapers, secret newspapers.

Q: Did you write some of the stuff that went into the newspapers, or did you distribute them, what did you do?

A: No, we -- I tried a little to begin with, because I started with this in 1940, we already -- we had the newspaper that started already autumn -- fall, '40, and the -- well, I think it fall -- '41, it was really started, on the -- the very good newspapers. So -- but it was written by our best brains, very good articles, and today you can read them in our resistance museum, they're all there, you can read them, and very interesting to read now.

Q: So how long did you work with the clandestine newspap -- were you also, by the way, working at this -- as an assistant accountant still? Did you go back?

A: Oh yes, I tried, but I hadn't had time for this, because now I was a resistant worker on full time.

Q: Full time.

A: So then I started to make different aliases because after one year, the Gestapo heard about Hans Jacobsen, he was one of the -- what the hell this is -- one of the leaders. And then the -- a man was tortured, and he said that well, he knew Hans Jacobsen, that was his address, and then of course then the Germans went out and they couldn't find any Hans Jacobsen at all, he had no telephone, he had no address, he had just nothing. So they -- I was there, and then --

Q: Was that your alias at the time?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Jacobsen?

A: Then I was Hans Jacobsen.

Q: Oh.

A: But then when that was known by the Germans, I changed into another name. And I really started to fake this myself. I learned it, and I think I -- I used -- when I had the false papers I had no -- I had made [indecipherable] myself. So I believed them, I knew they were correct.

Q: Was this easy for you to do? To fake yourself?

A: Well, no, it wasn't easy to start with, but for instance, will you -- you will see in one of my passports, one of the worst Gestapos we have ever had was a fellow called Martinsen, he was the head of the Norwegian part of Gestapo, and I today -- even today I can write his signature, because I had the signa -- his signature on one of my passports, and I think I today could write K. A. Martinsen, pol -- chief of police, secret police in Norway. So i -- i -- that was -- I hadn't had it in school, so I had to start from the ke -- beginning, you know?

Q: Tell me something, did you go -- during this period, the beginning period a-as you started in the resistance in -- did you go back to your family and talk to your parents and tell them what you were doing, so the -- that they --

A: A that --

Q: -- they wouldn't worry, or they would worry?

A: That's an interesting question, because in '43, January, one man was tortured, and he knew my real name, Gunnar Sonsteby. I think it was my real name. Then they went right up to Rjukan and arrested my father as a hostage for me. But I talked with him, and I thought this would happen, that was the -- the way they did it. And we agreed he'd take -- said -- he said to me, "You take your job, I'll take mine." He was in prison -- concentration camp for two and a half years. But I knew I had to go on, and he was kept in Norway because they couldn't send him to Germany, because then they couldn't threaten to shoot him, you know? They would have -- liked to have in the neighborhood so they could shoot him if it was something with me. But he survived.

Q: So early on, in 1940, or '41, you spoke to your parents, and --

A: Yes.

Q: -- it was clear to them that this was --

A: And my mother knew -- my mother knew about it too.

Q: Okay.

A: And they -- I helped them, they were -- I was living in Oslo, and when all the [indecipherable] were taken. Then, she took a couple of these [indecipherable] up to Rjukan, it was used there as a secret [indecipherable] for the rest of the war.

Q: Hm. And your sister, was she involved in the resistance?

A: Yes. Very little, because th-then it would have been too much.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So, it wasn't --

Q: You mean it was too much to have two children --

A: Yeah. In the small town like that, it wouldn't do, it had to be other people that took over.

Q: Uh-huh. So did you get bored with working on the newspaper and wanted to do something more?

A: No, I didn't get bored, because it was terribly interesting. But I h -- then, in '41, I wanted to go to Sweden to report because I don't -- I didn't know what about our allies? What about our people in -- over the -- overseas, in the -- in London. And knew -- I knew they had their office in Stockholm. So I went with one of my refu -- he was a refugee, over to Sweden, to report. And then they told me, we can use you as a growing -- as a career between Oslo and Stockholm. So I started that. So I had about 15 - 20 of these trips between the towns, to report. Then I knew a little more what they wanted with us, from England, wh-what the allied wanted, through the Norwegian government and our defense people in -- in England. So our -- after awhile, I think it was in '42, ninth of April, '42, then I was in touch with the British. And I said, we're have an organization, I didn't know what. It was a S.O.E., special operations executive. And then they asked me, are you willing to go back to Norway, put up an office in Oslo for us, secret of course. And I did. So from ninth of April '40 to ninth of April '43, I had an office in Stockholm -- in Oslo, and every fortnight it came a courier to me, and I had to report -- make a report, so that had be ready when he came, so I wrote the report every fortnight that year, about conditions in Norway.

Q: Let me ask you something. Prior to that, were you not taken to a refugee camp in Sweden?

A: Yes, but --

Q: Or -- of -- of --

A: -- I had the -- I don't know how I -- it was very se -- very special in Sweden, if you left the camp, you would be arrested, but I was lucky, so I was -- I was wanted in Sweden very early. So when I was in Sweden later on, I had to be -- keep in Stockholm very -- I couldn't go into hotels, so -- and I had some Swedes want -- could -- they dared to keep me in their small hotel, for instance, but when I -- the first time I was in Stockholm, I had to stay there three months. And then I spent my days going into different small coffee shops, because in daytime I couldn't go to that place where I lived, so -- but it was very natural that I was wanted in Sweden because you couldn't have Norwegian refugees running all around the country, in a war. So it was very natural. So I was put in -- prisoner for about three months, but then I got out again, under a false name. I put up a new name, a new family name, and I was put to court, and they all believed me. So then I got out to Stockholm, and then in secrecy back to Oslo.

Q: And what was this new name? I think it's rather significant.

A: Oh, that was the -- I picked the name, then I knew the British people in Stockholm, and the Norwegians, the army people, they wouldn't -- wouldn't know exactly what happened to me. So I put up a new name this time, I s -- I call myself Gunnar Lear. And my father was a station -- gas station owner in Oslo, I -- my mother was Margda Lear, and all that, was a big family, and so they all believed me, then Swedish state [indecipherable] security police, and I got out, but then I put the name Gunnar Lear, that means in English, you know it's Gunnar Liar. And when the British saw that, they really got a kick out of it. So they say, oh, this is Gunnar, certainly.

Q: And the Swedes did not check to see whether this was a real person, or --

A: Well, they checked, you see, but I -- I did it in -- in Karlstar in Sweden. Then I called the authorities in Stockholm, and I say, do you know any Gunnar Lear? And then I had given up the name, it was a fellow, was Norwegian that was in Associated Press in nor -- in Norway. I -- and I

-- I had taken him over the border, I had saved him. And then he said -- when he said -- I mentioned him, and he was a very well known man, of course. So it -- and he said [indecipherable] he said to himself. He was -- I knew he was brilliant. Oh yes, I know Gunnar L-Lear. Oh, certainly I know him. He was very quick, and that helped me. Otherwise I would have been -- been in custody in Sweden for the rest of --

Q: Rest of --

A: -- for the war.

Q: So when you became involved with the S.O.E., is it a person named Daniel Ring who brought you in?

A: That's right, he -- he brought me in. And we discussed what my number should be, and I -- I wanted the number 13. That's my lucky number. And he said well, you can't have that, another fellow -- so you can have 24. From then on my cover -- call it number was 24, under which I was known in the resistance movement. Number 24 was -- then I knew who it was.

Q: So now, let me ask you this question. How -- how do you get money in these situations? You don't get a salary from the resistance movement, how does --

A: That's right, that's right. You got the money from the British and the Norwegian liaison, because they knew I was -- you know, all refugees coming to Sweden, they had money, Norwegian money, with them. And the -- they were -- then they were changed into Swedish money, and all this money could be used by us. So I had this Norwegian money back to Norway, it was sent back to us. We used millions of kroner. [indecipherable] Again, we had money in England, because o -- of our merchant fleet, and the tanker fleet. You know, our tanker fleet, they say the tanker fleet -- we -- England had to have fuel -- fuel. Fuel is a war. And they needed for billions of troops, everything. 60 percent of all Jews coming to that island, came from

Norwegian [indecipherable]. So they said -- Churchill said in parliament, this is about one million soldiers. [indecipherable] So that's the -- the real effort was Norway -- that was the real effort of Norway, this fleet.

Q: When you were staying at different people's ho -- I gather you had to move around a good deal, you didn't have one place where you lived. Did you pay people?

A: No. But no, no, it couldn't be paid, that -- that wouldn't do. But of course, I had all kinds of connections, I had enough food, I had connections everywhere. So when I went in hiding and lived with the family, I had all s -- always -- I couldn't sit there, eat myself, so I had all this food for the whole family. I couldn't go into there with food for myself and the family didn't have it.

Q: Right.

A: So it was never difficult [indecipherable] that, and that meant so much to them. But they were anti-Nazi so they didn't [indecipherable] that. They could offer you meals, which they almost -- it's impossible. So it were -- they were all patriots and th-they took a very great risk. If they came there and I had to shoot myself out, the whole family would be in trouble.

Q: So when you became part of the SOE --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- what was your -- what was your role? The SOE's connected with the British, yes?

A: Yes, and later on, of course, with the Norwegian government in London, so it was all put together and coordinated, so they -- and I was reporting all kinds -- intelligence was first of all to begin with, in all kinds of intelligence, but they needed everything from Norway. For instance, pilots, books, to get all kinds of things, of the -- all kinds of information about nor -- Norwegian Nazi authorities. Was very valuable things for -- for the allied, and of course, all troop movements.

Q: So you had to have -- did you choose agents in the field who would get this information and bring it to you? And were you --

A: Yeah, I had friends. I made friends, of course, and you could si -- when -- when I came into -- outside Oslo and needed a contact for instance, and we -- I knew it was about four or 5,000 informers. I usually picked doctor. They were very -- there was very few [indecipherable] so I -- I took the chance to run and see the doctor and he could help me. Or I would go to the teacher, and sometimes the priest, they were all -- that's an -- that's a chance you took, and I was always -- I always was lucky, or -- or I picked the right people.

Q: Were you frightened?

A: I was lucky, I had good parents, so my -- my psyche was -- my psyche -- is that right? M-Must have been very good, because I didn't have any. Th -- I must have been very, very -- back when God gave us the nerves, I must have been way ba -- way back in the queue.

Q: What do you think in your background, in your t -- as you were growing up? Was there something you think that prepared you for this? It se -- it seems as if it was something just very natural to you, you just decided this was what you had to do.

A: Well, in a way you are right. I just had to do it, it came naturally. So and that, of course, when you heard how the Nazis had gone, with -- when you -- what they did to the German population, the -- the Jews, and the same what they did -- did to all your friends. In a way it was not necessary to hate them, but you had to fight them. It was natural to feel so angry. How they treated i -- for instance, when they arrested women, it -- it -- it -- it was incredible that they tortured women. It was -- how could you believe? So we got very angry. And of course -- and that was with the -- the rest of my friends. I -- I -- they had nerves, of course, but I think this was -- that was really what made them fight.

Q: So you were getting information and then you were encoding information to send it to --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- to England. And how were you doing that? What was the process?

A: That was done -- I put my own system. I took a book in Norway, and I started it with a page in that book, and I took -- I counted syllables, both ways, and then you could -- it was a hell of a trouble, you see, so I got so angry and tired, this was like to be in school again, I sat nights and did that, so I had a -- then I had the man that could take over. So --

Q: So ex --

A: So he did that [indecipherable] and it came to Stockholm, and I had the same book, the same page, and I could easily -- we coded only the names. The rest you wrote could be written, but the names were important, and the places, of course.

Q: So can you explain the system? Was it by syllable, or by letter?

A: By syllable.

Q: By -- by syllable.

A: Yeah, you counted down in that page, on that top of the page, you find a e. Number five down. So that's -- I think it was very simple, and I think it's almost impossible to -- if you had the book and you didn't know anything about that, you couldn't solve it, I think.

Q: And did they send you messages back in the same way?

A: Exactly.

Q: To get -- to ask you to do things?

A: Yes. But was names and places that were coded. That was the important thing.

Q: And not -- not the others, right?

A: No, because you know, I was in Sweden, and reported every -- every quarter. So I -- I knew what I thought they knew, what they wanted.

Q: And how did you go back and forth from Oslo to Stockholm?

A: Oh, I had good friends, and I knew the way. I had the good papers, so I usually took a train o -- up to border town called Kongsvinger, and from there, then I had that -- who did help me there? I found a man that was head of the -- then -- the state transportation system in that town. So he knew everything of course. He helped, he was my agent there. So then I -- from stock -- I-I -- in that period when I came on the -- and board a train, I had the control by Gestapo officers almost every time. So one of my passports, which you have seen, that has been going through about 40 Gestapo controls, I think. Then I was -- I was a stock worker, working in a stock up there. So they believed it, and I looked fairly in -- innocent, you know, don't you think so? So it worked all the time. And then how to get into the border? It was about 25 miles. Then, in -- in summer I used to bicycle and in winter I used something I think you know in the States, called a kick sledge. Have you ever heard about that?

Q: No.

A: You find it in some places, in Wisconsin, or some th -- they know it there, kick sledge. They know it in Sweden, Norway and Finland. And this kick sledge was -- took me there, and -- very quick --

Q: So what is it like? What is a kick sledge?

A: It's a -- a sledge, which -- it's a kind of --

Q: Do you stand behind them?

A: Exactly, yeah. And it built in that way so you can stand behind it. And then you --

Q: But who -- how do y --

A: -- just kicked your way.

Q: You kick your way?

A: Yes.

Q: I see, so there are no dogs?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: No, you did it yourself.

Q: You did -- uh-huh.

A: Keeping to that built up. So it was a very good thing.

Q: Did you have to change your na -- use different identities each time you went, or did you use the Liar name -- Lear?

A: No, no, I had changed many times since that time. And it was so strict. If you came up to Kongsvinger, and you're in -- you were controlled, then if you had a passport showing it was made out in Oslo, you would be taken. So I had to make new passports, which they did for me up there -- would -- and I did -- by the way, I did them s -- myself, but I got a form up there. And then I had the passport being issued by the Kongsvinger police. Then they wouldn't say, oh gosh, he's -- he's living here.

Q: Now --

A: But if you -- if you had a passport issued by Oslo police, you would be interrogated.

Q: Why?

A: Because you were suspicious then. You were man outside the -- the -- the German guard in that town, of course they had a couple of security police, and they said all strangers to

Kongsvinger, be careful. They might be [indecipherable] they might be resistance workers. So that's was a [indecipherable]

Q: So when you -- when the police would look at your I.D. card, you -- you did -- you weren't afraid of anything?

A: No, I had so good papers. I knew they were good.

Q: You knew.

A: I knew I would fool them.

Q: Look at that smile.

A: But of course, if you had some -- some stupid thing could stop it of course, but I was lucky, all the time. And I was from February '43, I was wanted and they had nice pictures of me at the Gestapo headquarters in Oslo. Nice pictures, but wi -- an average looking man like me, I have a nose, I have eyes, and a mouth, ears, that's -- you cannot pick up a man -- I think you can talk to the police here, it's impossible to pick up a average looking man from a picture. I knew it was impossible, I -- and I -- I still, I believed it. That made me look just [indecipherable] I walked around in Oslo street without trouble.

Q: We're going to take a break now.

A: Good. If you --

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Mr. Sonsteby, you were connected a little earlier on with the group, the resistance group Milorg, am I right?

A: That's correct.

Q: Or are you --

A: That's correct [indecipherable]

Q: So tell me how -- why it was that you did not stay with that group.

A: Well, I did, because I followed it all the time, and I -- I mention the name called Knut Moyen. He and I worked very closely together. And everything I could do to help him. Then all the SOE sent in instructors from Great Britain to Norway, and it was a mixture there, it was a little difficult, because the Norwegian organization did one thing, and the groups from England did another thing. It was the Norwegian independent company number one. But then, together with Knut Moyen we could discuss this, and I could help him out. We were both a little unlucky because one of the people coming from England, he was arrested, he was tortured, and he became more or less an informer. Of course, this -- he was shot, he got shot right through the head, and [indecipherable] so it was terrible, but we are both a little unlucky there because many, many people, 200 people are arrested because of that instructor who was tortured. But otherwise, I took care of -- I was asked by my authorities to take care of all people come -- all agents coming in from England, from the -- coming around the central part of Norway, and I took care of them, that was part my job, so we could discuss this, and in the -- in a couple of years it was all coordinated. It was a little because the [indecipherable] thought I should built up with Norwegians alone, but they finally saw that some of the people inside Norway that built up the resistance, they were clever enough to let us -- so they could cooperate, but you know, you

couldn't talk to each other in that way in Norway. I-I-It was all secret, you know. Communications with England was difficult, everything was difficult, but in two, three years, it was all coordinated within SOE, and the Norwegian authorities in England and also the home front people, the military central leadership in Oslo, it was all finally coordinated from I would say, '43, it started. And we had also a very good leader who was very clever, and th -- he was over to England a couple of times, which I was also, but he really was a good man, and he -- they understood in England that he was a -- quite a terribly clever fellow. He re -- he impressed them. That helped. And we had also, of course, Communists, which didn't agree in that kind of leadership. But I worked together with them, so when I met the man who fought the Germans, that was the important part, whatever he was. That was the important part for me, so I was lucky. Had a good cooperation with them, but legally on top, they would -- they would listen more, of course, to Stockholm, Moscow, than -- instead of to us. But they were not under Moscow, but to a certain extent they listened more to Moscow than London, which is -- was natural, you know. But it -- it worked fairly well in Norway.

Q: And how would you distinguish the Milorg people from the Linge people, from the Communists? I mean, how -- ho --

A: It was the same young Norwegian people, but with a different education, call it. Where -- when you came over to England, you were taken care of by the British on the -- went through all that training schools, and they were -- must have been the best instructors in the world, because when you met -- when you re-met Germans in the war, beginning of the war, the -- like all the soldiers and all that, you -- we felt inferior. But after being instructed and trained in England, we didn't feel inferior at all. We knew we had the best weapons, we knew we had the best brains to train us, so now we could be equal. And being equal, I think we were the best. I think so.

Q: So wer -- were all these different groups, representatives from them, brought to England? The Milorg had people who were England trained also?

A: Yes, there were all kinds of people, schoolboys, and people without schooling. It could be carpenters, lumberjacks, everything. And they all formed these groups, they could go into the Navy, they could be pilots. They were trained in what's called Little Norway in Toronto, Canada. They were sent over and they did very well, and the -- first of all, I think everybody want to be a pilot. So I remember when I was in Stockholm, I should go over to England, I said, can I be a pilot? No, he said, y-you -- you can, but I think we have another [indecipherable] for you, called the Norwegian independent company, we'll put you in there, probably, send you back to Norway.

Q: And why did so many people want to be pilots?

A: I don't know, because they had done very well, I think in -- from -- you know, over London in 1941 and '42, they did very well. So --

Q: Were there any bad conflicts between these different groups?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Not at all. It could be, of course, when you're immigrants, it can always be little small quarrels, but in nor -- to Norwegians, we had been very lucky, and it was -- when we came back to Norway, or when it started, at the end of the war, it was only one real body, and that was the resistance movement in -- under the leadership of the homefront people, and they were the only -- the Communists were -- didn't put up a group like that, so it was all -- we had -- we had no, shall we say possibilities th-that they should start fighting each other in Norway. We were very -- extremely lucky. It may be that we are -- I don't know why, really. But we agreed, or we had all

-- one common emeny -- enemy, that was Nazis. And so that was the feeling all over. I think -- I would say that 95, we had 98 percent behind us in Norway. They tried whatever they could, they tried to make the pupils, they tried to make the teachers into nat -- Nazis. I mean, it wasn't -- it was -- I think it was impossible in Norway. I think we had -- after five years hard propaganda, I cannot see that they had any Norwegian turning into Nazi. Only opposite, it was the opposite. So that doesn't -- pure principle is nothing for us. We have democratic rules.

Q: Tell me a little bit more about what the general population was doing. I understand that the bishops made statements all over the country when they resigned, is that right?

A: Yes. That's right. And also, our -- all of our -- they call it the -- what would you call it here, the top court in [indecipherable]

Q: Judiciary?

A: The high court --

Q: The high court?

A: -- people. The -- the Supreme High Court. They all withdrew already in '41. So they all withdrew because it was no -- it was no freedom, it was no rights, it was all German propaganda, so they all withdrew. They were not arrested, by the way, but they disappeared into -- but didn't do anything.

Q: And teachers, professors?

A: Yes, teachers and professors --

Q: Wasn't there a strike?

A: -- they did a wonderful job. To begin with, from '41 - '42, then -- the little Nazi party, they wanted to have schoolchildrens into uniforms. They didn't use the swastika, but they had now a new kind of a sign, it was a sun, course -- cross, sun cross. It was a kind of a cross. And -- and

schoolchildren should now be put in uniforms. It was almost to that. And then they put up all teachers, professors were put in a new organization called some teacher's association, Nazis. And they all refused. And then they took about -- arrested thousand. 500 were sent up to concentra -- tra -- concentration camp up in the north, very north, at our northest town, and then th -- 500 were sent over to Trawnia to be shipped up to Trawnia, to this concentration camp up in the north. And they had a small passenger ship, and that -- on deck it was German soldiers and underneath, in -- in the room of the ship, it was put 500 teachers. And they were sent up to the -- in that little ship. It would take about 14 days to the very north, and then -- oh, course it was, when an allied plane saw that ship, it was all Germans. It was a small troop transported. It looked like that. That was the idea for Terboven, the chief Nazi in Norway, and Quisling. They thought that was a good idea, maybe allied planes would bomb them, and who had done it? That kill them all. And it was protested very hard from the who -- all the population to Quisling, and to Terboven. Please stop it, you cannot do this. They did.

Q: They stopped it?

A: Yeah, but the -- no, they sent them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They -- they didn't listen to protests, they said, this is the way we want it, we want them to be gone. So we don't care. And luckily, nothing happened, and they came -- but most of it -- I think it was many teachers that die on the way, it was very little water, very little food, and then they came up to the concentration camp, and the -- after about a year, the Germans [indecipherable] that little party, you know, Nazi party, they came in. So the -- they won this fight, the teachers. And it was women, and men of course.

Q: H-How do you account for this response on the part of Norwegians to refuse? I -- w-w-were the -- is Norway filled with heroes?

A: No --

Q: In some way?

A: -- it -- well, you saw all the troubles that -- I think that I've seen many Germans have seen the same, but it was penetrated completely by security police, and the informers, that had come so far in Norway, so -- but it was -- they were trying, but luckily we -- well -- well, they had -- they had a power, so we could just try to in a way sabotage it, that was the way, you know, and I thought it was just the way to do it. To try to help it, and they -- we are -- it's very hard to get to know each [indecipherable] democracy, I think. Of course, it's very hard to explain that it was only two percent, one and a half percent. I-It's still hard to explain that there was so few.

Q: So few who appr -- who --

A: The Nazis.

Q: Nazis.

A: Or who were belong -- believing in the Nazi. It's really hard to explain.

Q: In 1942, things got much worse for the Jews in Norway. There were what, 1700 or 1800 Jews in Norway, am I correct?

A: About 2,000 in all to begin with. And it was -- could have been a few Jews coming from other countries to come to that safe Norway. And like Willie Brandt, for instance, and others. I know, of course, many Jews came, very famous Jews, doctors and musicians. But then the -- in '42, it -- the first thing that started -- you saw my passport, they put a J there. Of course that was awful. We didn't understand it, how they could do it, because in Norway, one was a Methodist, another was a Baptist and another was a Jew, we didn't think of that. Now they tried to make us -- a kind

of propaganda against Jews, but it didn't work, it -- not at all. It didn't work in -- in Norway. We hadn't had that impression at all. So then it started a little more, and the trouble was, now when I think back, y-you know that far -- that far -- all the -- all the ar-archives, you know, all Jews. They found that in [indecipherable] and in Oslo. Well, how could you help it, in a way, but then was when the trouble started, you know? [indecipherable] they wouldn't know everyone, every family, and then s -- I was standing there again at the -- summer, July, August, '42. Then I had a family called Rubinstein, and they -- they had a feeling that it was maybe worse than they thought, but the trouble was that if you left for Sweden, you lost everything. You were sure to lose everything. You lost your house, you lost the bank account, if you had any. If -- you lost everything, everything when you have left Norway. Your business was taken over by authorities, Nazi authorities. And if you didn't, then it was about -- I took the family over, and I think it was good idea, but we didn't feel that all sh -- all should be done, b -- because they had Norwegian passports. And then the rumors came -- I would say so very much, in October, '42, but then suddenly they went there, and the -- remember, the police had been organized, reorganized somehow, it was Nazi police. And then that night, it was -- now it was about 700 left, about eight, I would say, 1200 had come out to begin with, and later on it was taken over by the resistance the people had wanted. Every -- in those years, everyone that wanted to go out, could be helped. I could easily take a family over, I had their o -- a-as I told you, I knew the people, I could take easily. And I had no trouble going into Sweden. But then the 700 in all families, older people, young people, and -- and children, old people. And then the -- then one day, one o -- why -- I heard it in this way, that one of my friends -- I knew a law -- a la -- a young lawyer, and his name was Hawkin [indecipherable] and he had a -- I didn't know he was a Jew, or anything, of course. I knew he had the passport, he had shown me that. Then he was a young lawyer, then

suddenly, six o'clock in the morning, I was to hear this, they came and they said, you are arrested because of the law so and so. He said, "I don't know that law. I never heard about it." He was a good lawyer, and he said, "It's wrong, it must be wrong." So -- but then -- well, you have to come with us. Your bank account is now taken, you lose your house and have you any jewels here, we have to have them now. Everything. And he was so bewildered, of course, and then that -- it was a shock to hear that new law, two days old, and the shock to hear he had no more things in life. They were all taken. And then he was taken away. I heard about this, and of course, then it started all -- all over Norway. A few were -- then, what happened to his wife, and a little daughter? Three days later, a man knocked at the door, five o'clock in the morning, and they said get away, soon. And so she moved from the second floor, up to the third floor, to -- and the family said please come in here. Six o'clock that morning the Gestapo came for her and her -- but she were -- they were saved. So many had --

Q: She was saved?

A: She was saved, and with the la -- little girl. She was taken care of and sent home to Sweden, so she was saved. But another thing, you know, what was terrible, I had also knew about the young man in [indecipherable]. He was a -- a Jew, 18 years old. He told me afterwards that he was now in resistance. And then he got to know his parents had been told, if he doesn't report to the police, they would all be taken. And of course, he gave himself up, and they took all of them. The Gestapo, security police, Nazis, lies, lies, and lies, that was all they had coming from that German [indecipherable]

Q: So, did the resistance warn Jews and say, things may happen, we want to take you out of Sweden, or did the Jews make contact with the resistance to ask for help?

A: No, I just -- for instance, we had a family, which I talked about, we discussed that openly. When I -- we had a -- a career, he -- they knew him very well, so they heard from Stockholm, they had news from the outside world. So they -- they heard about the Crystal Night, you know, all that, so now they started to think, maybe it can happen here. And about the 1200, they have started to think that way. But I talked to Jule Benko my friend that is here with me. He is one of -- in our parliament he was the speaker of our [indecipherable] parliament for 12 years, and we discussed this. He was a young Jew at that time. He was in resistance, '42, so we discussed between ourselves now, we are discussed it now, what did you think -- what did I think. We had the same view on this. We had just thought the same in August. So he -- then Gestapo was -- had wanted him, so he went over to Sweden, of course, because we had to flee, because he was now wanted by the Gestapo, then you had to flee. And he --

Q: So what -- what was your view, that it was so alike at the time?

A: That was that we didn't -- we couldn't believe that they would be arrested, or -- or w-we could believe that they would be arrested to a camp in Norway, but the rest we didn't at all consider. And he went over to Sweden and later on he came over to Canada and joined the Norwegian Air Force, and all his family are lost. All of them. So he knows what happened.

Q: So in 1942, you don't know what's happening in Russia, you don't know that there are more than a million people who have been shot.

A: Well, in -- they -- how they treated -- when they came into Russia, of course. But coming -- going on into Norway, trying to keep them -- they tried to keep us as a civilized nation, but all the -- the rule there, it was harder and harder. Hitler had of course hoped that th-the Nordic types there would be drawn in, because -- so he was furious when they had this fight -- all the resistance in Norway. And we lost many. Also at this time of '42 August, it was thousands of

Norwegians that were waiting to get out Sweden, because Sweden were neutral. It was important to us that Sweden was neutral. Without the neutral Sweden I cannot see how we could have had a resistance at all. Because all routes towards England, over the sea, were stopped in '42 for refugees. And it -- we could take 50,000 over to Sweden during the war. And we had them out at the same times, at -- this shocked us, the Jews, we had -- could have had two, 3,000 in Oslo waiting to get over to Sweden to save their lives. We als -- mixed together, you know, so --

Q: W-Were the Swedes like the Norwegians in the sense of even though they were politically neutral, were they anti-Nazi in your experience?

A: In my opinion, I met only at the border in small town, Gottenberg, also, and even in Stockholm, I didn't meet anybody that had a Nazi sympathy. I knew it was some, but I -- I didn't meet any. And I had a wonderful -- but I -- it was difficult when I -- I had my headquarters at the -- at the farm, on the -- right on the Swedish Norwegian border. And then I understood that on the other side, the custom officer, I was pretty sure he was intelligence officer. Before I had been in army, lived in Sweden, I [indecipherable] custom official, with a officer -- intelligence officer, and I was right. So I got in touch with him, and from then on we worked together. But if it had been known, and the police, they came up and fetched me on the border, and took me in this sleeper to Stockholm. I was -- had a free way. And I -- I could tell them about all Norwegian -- all troops, German troops, were they difficult, or could they attack. I could tell them everything, and -- but if this had been known in Stockholm, in the Ministry of Justice, they would have been arrested, because if you ha -- re -- if you, in front of Germany, in front of Hitler, it's only wer -- one way to be neutral, that is to be neutral. That's -- that's my view on it.

Q: You decided at some point, I believe it was in 1942, that a man named Swenson --

A: Yes.

Q: -- might be willing to become part of the secret police so that he could be a -- I guess one would say a double agent in some way, yes?

A: You're well -- very well advised. My -- I came to a small town called Notodden, very near to my hometown. Had a -- I came to a small town called Notodden. There was a policeman, he was a secret member of the military groups. I said to him, how are you liked in Notodden? Well, very good. Will -- will you try to be a little more, yo -- not rude, but be difficult to the population. And then I said to him, why don't you try to come into the Nazi police in Oslo. And of course, he applied, and it was sent back for the police headquarters, Nazi, they send back, what kind of people to the -- to the -- the party members in Notodden, that -- the Quisling party members. And they said, "How is Swensen? Is he a -- could he be a resistance?" No, he is not. He is one of us. Of course it was very ba -- very sad for Swensen, too, because the population there, they more or less hated him because they thought he -- that he really was that. So then I said, you come in to the police, and he joined the police, state police, and the -- or the federal Nazi police. And then one day we had two people that was arrested, so we agreed that Swensen had to be offered, he had to -- now he had to take those people out and try to get out of Sweden, too -- over to Sweden [indecipherable]. He had the right papers, and he went up to the -- worked together with the Gestapo people, the Germans, and they said okay, you can interrogate them. So he took them out from the prison, did not interrogated, put -- took them over to Sweden. And he had also [indecipherable] so we lost a very good spy of course, within federal state Nazi police. But he helped me that -- that time. I got go know -- got his passport, police passport, so I made one similar. So now I will -- had also the passport as a secret police line within federal police. And I could use that for special times, which I did. So it was good to have, to pretend being a -- a Gestapo.

Q: So did you have -- just to be light a little bit, did you have a big wallet filled with all these different I.D.s, or did you keep them in your apartment and take one when you needed one?

A: No, the reason -- you know, I came over to Sweden every fortnight -- every fourth month.

Q: Right, right.

A: Then I took them over to Sweden and let them stay. And I had notes -- note, it was crosses and all that, and I left my books in Sweden every time I had new, new, left them over, new, all the time.

Q: I see.

A: So when the war was over, it was all in Sweden. So that's why I have them now, I could show people. They're very -- very few know this in Norway, I think, but I think they're very unique, the whole collection.

Q: Why would somebody like Swensen agree to be a de --

A: He -- he --

Q: -- it's such a difficult position to be in, you know?

A: No, he was -- I knew he was a good man, and I knew he was in -- in the -- in a military group, he had started it in Notodden.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So he was one of the very good people. So -- but he was one of the few that really could do this. Otherwise we're taken as being in resistance, you know, and arrested and tortured. So he had been lucky.

Q: So for how long was he acting as this secret --

A: Oh, it was a very short time, about three months.

Q: Did he have a family?

A: Yes.

Q: So --

A: But they were not t-taken.

Q: They weren't?

A: Yeah, well they stayed in Norway. That was difficult and different, very different. Some -- i -- some of the family would be taken, but very often they were -- well, maybe not -- they had not enough space in their prisons, so they had to realize, are they important, are they dangerous. So they let them out after many housewife, or wifes of the resistance workers were set free after two, three months.

Q: But that must have been difficult for him being in Sweden won-wondering what would happen to his wife.

A: Could happen anything.

Q: Anybody, uh-huh.

A: They could have been shot.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because that was very serious, what he had done [indecipherable] he was a real spy --

Q: Yeah. Right.

A: -- within their outfit.

Q: Hm. When you wrote your book, you -- you talked about this feeling of restlessness that you would get in a situation, a kind of sixth sense that something bad was going to happen. There was one evening when you're with Baker Anderson, and his daughter, I believe.

A: Yes. We ran --

Q: And in the middle of the night, you th -- you thought something --

A: Yeah, we went to the mountains because they had a beautiful place up there, and um -- far up in the mountains in Telemark district, not far from Rjukan by the way. And we went up there, and it was also a courier from -- from Stockholm, which had alls -- all kinds of false papers, too. But we went up in the mountains there, and we sat discussing der night, and I had a feeling that -- it must have been -- I don't know if a sense, sixth sense, but must have been kind of a computer, and I put that thought in my brain, maybe -- he is there, maybe he is under surveillance, what about his daughter? They had been arrested once, so it must have told me, get away. So in -- during the night, two o'clock at night, I left. I -- they -- they laughed [indecipherable] think I was very stupid. So I left. Six o'clock in the morning it was, 30 men with three leaders from different [indecipherable] coming for me.

Q: 30?

A: 30 of them. And they were looking for Mr. Bloch. I had [indecipherable] got by the name Mr. Bloch, I thought that was a nice name. So it was the Bloch this time. They had heard that Bloch was with -- they were arrested, but they were let out after two, three months in prison. They didn't -- they said, these people cannot -- they don't know anything, so -- but that was a chance.

Q: And you biked --

A: Yes, I biked --

Q: -- to where, to your home?

A: -- over in the mountains, over to Rjukan. And was in a way a little stupid because in Sweden I had lost my real identity card for Gunnar Sonsteby. I had torn it to pieces so the secret police shouldn't -- the Swedish sec -- couldn't get it. So I went up to Rjukan to the police there. I knew they didn't know I had been in Sweden or anything, I knew that. I took the chance and I got a new, real passport, which is in my collection now, for Gunnar Sonsteby. So, I had luck.

Q: And how did you explain that -- you just lost it, is that what you told them?

A: Oh yes, I just told them I lost it in Oslo.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They didn't know. So I was lucky, they didn't know.

Q: Now, Anderson was a baker, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you not have something to do with his place in gro -- was it Groland Street in --

A: Oh yes, I had -- since that, when -- after they had been out again, we started again. That was -- I think it was one of my central places in Oslo, it was, actu -- matter of fact, but then he was -- later on he was under suspicion again, so then I had to take him over to Sweden. But his wife, and la -- daughter, they were standing, helping us for a year, and then finally we had to send them also over to Sweden as refugees because then the -- there was all blown, the Gestapo [indecipherable]. Then we disappeared of course, from that place.

Q: Right. And how did you use that place? Was this a -- a meeting place for the [indecipherable]

A: Meeting place for all kinds of resistance workers. It had started -- he started in a way, but he had the bakery. The Germans came to Oslo and I said, you are putting your bakery at our disposal. He said, no, I don't. And I took it. He didn't want it. I said -- one of the very few. And then he started to send bread over to the prison. Was very near to his place, and he -- they got in some bread to the prisoners there. So he -- that's how he started, and later on all the couriers came to him and we met there. So it was a real central place for resistance.

Q: Did you meet upstairs? The bakery's downstairs and you met upstairs?

A: Yes. Was very important because you had to be in places where you were not seen or mixed in to other people. The shop was downstairs, it was hundreds of people in and out all the time.

And you can go in there, and you can just go up the stairs to the second floor. And when I came into the shop it was a very nice girl standing there behind a desk, and I had also eyesight with her. I knew if she had the usual way, she smiled and say hello, how are you Bloch, or -- she knew my different names. And then if she would say -- or just smile. If she had been something wrong, I would have known it immediately. I would have turned around. So that was my security sign. It was very simple and effective.

Q: So a -- a lot of your work really depended upon people who were not necessarily working in the resistance, but always supporting you.

A: Oh yes. And you got supporters everywhere bac -- but you knew, among your supporters in Oslo, it could be f -- one of the 4,000 informers. So you had to -- a little luck.

Q: Did you have a gun on you all the time?

A: It depended. When I had a sabotage to do, an operation in Oslo, I was armed. But when I worked -- walked around and organized and did all my resistance work, my intelligence work, helping -- taking people over to Sweden, then I would never carry a pistol of course, because it was controlled everywhere. I would run into control, I would be there.

Q: Did you also have poison with you in case you were caught?

A: No. No, I didn't want that.

Q: You didn't want it?

A: I want -- I lived, and during the night I was sleeping behind a locked door, on the fourth floor, third floor, and I knew I would -- they would wake me up and I could start fighting them. Now I always [indecipherable] hand grenades, a couple of pistols, and the last six months I had also some explosives beside my bed. Because I couldn't be taken. I knew -- they -- they knew, I

knew. It wasn't if they interrogated me, they could torture -- they didn't need -- they knew I knew. So --

Q: So you were simply going to fight. You were either going to get out or be killed?

A: Yeah, I had to because I would ruin the whole organization, if I was -- was taken.

Q: Because you knew too much?

A: It was just natural thinking.

Q: At one point in 1942 -- I don't -- it was the late summer in August, I think you got some sort of a order to borrow the printing plates from the bank, from Norway?

A: Yes, that was a interesting job. I got the letter from the Minister of Finance in England that was -- they wanted to print money in England because they were scarce of money in Norway. So they asked me to go to the Bank of Norway, it's like -- like Fort Knox here, is it? And the -- fetch the steel plates for 50 kroner and 100 kroner, that's about five dollars and 20 dollars, roughly. That was very important to have, and I got to know some of the people, and of course their bank manager, he -- when he saw me, a young boy of 23, in with the -- was a very bad -- my clothes were a little filthy, and they said, this fellow must be crazy if I should believe him. And he said, I want -- first of all, I want a few words. The man that -- running the radio from Great Britain, the Norwegian radio with BBC, he was very well known in Norway, and he was a personal friend of the bank manager, and he said, I want five lines from him, five words with that and that. And then he said, now I got rid of that fellow. Three weeks later I came up to his office and I showed him, here it is, from your friend in England. And they saw it was, then he believed me, then that started the whole thing.

Q: And this was real, you didn't forge this letter?

A: No.

Q: No, this was a real one.

A: No, it -- he knew it was the real letter. He knew that he wrote exactly what he had suggested. And he o -- or I -- he also could have had -- we talk -- we -- we talked about that. He could have a special from that fellow if I had asked him, you say on the radio from London that for instance somebody si -- a special sign that the weather is nice today, could be, but he could have got that. But we didn't need it to do that, be -- but I could have d-done that easily. But then he -- the whole board, went into hiding. They had [indecipherable] court, they didn't stay at home that night when I had the pla -- plates and took them over to Sweden. The next morning, eight o'clock, I could call him and say they're all safe in Sweden and England.

Q: How did you carry them? In what -- what did you put them in?

A: I had, at that time we had no gasoline. I had a little, but the Germans didn't, and they -- usually you can use gasoline, and we had a charcoal burner. And you had sacks with also charcoal to burn and make the -- the -- the car running. And on the bottom of that sack, I had the -- that little package of steel plates. And we took them up to Kongsvinger, and -- but you know, it's always happening, something, it -- it was dark night, and the -- then the -- suddenly all the lights in the car disappeared, so we landed in a ditch. And I said to my friend the chauffeur, what the hell are we doing now? And then a car came in, a German car, a big car with about 20 Germans in. And they offered me to take us up again. And I said -- I said, oh, I said, please, come on, I said. And when I left them I was glad that they le -- left us, I said -- I say, Auf Wiedersehen, so nice, you know, Auf Wiedersehen. So then --

Q: So was this -- you were in a car, or you were in a truck?

A: No, I was in a car. It was -- I used a -- a taxi driver. He worked for me in Oslo. They were all perfect, I must say. I didn't find any taxi driver that was a Nazi, by the way, but my friend

Hornbeck, he -- he -- he -- that was be -- before I had got my own driver's license. But I found after that, that I had to get my own driver's license. So I made one, and drove into the traffic, it went all right, in '42 - '43.

Q: Why did you decide that you had to have your own driver's license and drive yourself?

A: Because I was all tra -- al-always a little -- you had to wait for the driver, you had to find one, and if you had your own car with false license plates, it's -- you wi -- may need it very soon, you know, very quick. You can't wait for a driver, or a taxi driver.

Q: So these Germans who helped you were not at all suspicious, were these soldiers?

A: No, they were soldiers, and they were usually kind --

Q: Really?

A: -- of course, to the population, because after all, they were taught to be, try to be kind to them. But when they were ordered to shoot 20 Norwegians, they would do it immediately. That was the difference. They were disciplined, and they -- all the leaders, SA -- SS troops, you know what they did. They got their orders from Gestapo, they worked closely with Gestapo, all of them, all the leaders there. And then you were just arrested, shot.

Q: So you got to Stockholm, you notified Oslo that the plates were there safely, then what happens?

A: They were -- during the night, they were -- they were copied and they were sent back to Norway.

Q: Same way, you went back?

A: Yeah, and I --

Q: In the car?

A: -- put it -- put in the place, back again.

Q: And did you go to the bank at night to return these, or during the day?

A: I -- I didn't do that, because at that time I didn't have -- I must not be seen in the neighborhood or any of those, it was too dangerous, where I had that -- it was one of the -- one of the business there or firms that supplied paper and other things to the -- he knew them very well, so I had that supplier go to them. Teda Munsen, he was -- he knew -- he was one -- one of the -- he was one of the very few that [indecipherable] this. He helped --

Q: So did he go from Stockholm to Oslo --

A: No.

Q: What --

A: He -- he didn't -- no, he was in Oslo, only in Oslo.

Q: Okay, so you --

A: So he helped me there.

Q: I see. And then you --

A: We had other people.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah. That could be couriers and --

Q: Now, were you in a particularly dangerous situation at that moment, because you had gone to the bank originally and gotten the plates?

A: No, there -- they hadn't seen me.

Q: They hadn't seen you then?

A: No, no, so -- and I was at that time Mr. Nilssen. [indecipherable] Oh, he had a beautiful address, he was not there. But what about Nilssen, have you -- they've never heard of any. So I was -- I was not there. No trouble.

Q: So what is this, your fifth or sixth or 10th name? You keep --

A: Oh yes, it could now be number 20.

Q: It could now be number 20. So the copies of the printing plates --

A: That came to England, and --

Q: And then they --

A: -- at the same time, I had to go up to the paper mill in Bergen to get the right paper. That I did, was sent over to England.

Q: And how was it sent to England?

A: That [indecipherable] paper.

Q: Really?

A: Special paper for Norwegian money.

Q: And was it flown to England or on a ship?

A: Yes, taken over by courier planes from Stockholm to -- to Scotland. You know, that was very strange that you had courier planes from Stockholm to England, and you had courier planes from Stockholm to Germany. And in a way, they let it happen because they both needed this courier planes.

Q: So the Germans didn't si -- di -- did they check what was on the planes?

A: Oh no, they couldn't check it in Sweden.

Q: They couldn't, because it's a courier plane.

A: Exactly. I mean, in Sweden, in neutral Sweden they couldn't check it. But [indecipherable] not at all that -- that we couldn't check the Germans and the allied couldn't check.

Q: So you got the paper on this plane, and the plates.

A: Oh yes. I didn't -- that was not my business, that was done by SOE in Stockholm.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: British, or Norwegians.

Q: But you found the paper?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what --

A: They got the paper over.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I can't recall how much it was, but it was --

Q: It had to be a lot, no? Because --

A: Yeah, but first of all, they could make similar in England with the paper, they had to have samples for all the paper [indecipherable] was very good paper in Norway.

Q: So now they forged million -- I mean much money.

A: Yes, but they -- I think they made about 20 million kroner over in England. It was very little used, because as I told you, it was -- all the refugees came with money, so of course that was the most safe money to use, that was the real money from Norway, but they were so well done, of course, because the people, it was a very famous company in England, and they had been doing that for Norwegians before. So they -- they knew exactly how to do it.

Q: So they stockpiled this money in England waiting to see whether they would need it?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you didn't use very much.

A: The 20 millions

Q: Yes, wow.

A: I didn't use any, but I know some did in Norway.

Q: It's quite a story.

A: Oh, it's a interesting story.

Q: Yes. Why did you take the name of Nordstrom, Gunnar Nordstrom? Do you remember?

A: You know, I thought that was a nice name --

Q: Nice name?

A: -- and it was a name that was used up in the district. Could be [indecipherable] i-it's a good Norwegian name. [indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm. And did you ha -- you had a cover story for each of these names, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: You had to know --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- who the parents were, and what --

A: And you see, I didn't dare to be lumberjack, because when I saw my hands, I say, oh this fellow cannot be a lumberjack. I didn't dare to do that, but I said I working in the stock -- some stock up there, some warehouse --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- by the way, was a warehouse worker. That suited more to my hands and the rest.

Q: So let's talk a little bit about this so-called ordinary look that you have, that you can sort of pass, that you're not suspicious.

A: Well, as I said, my -- I had no special marks, I had ears, as I said, and a us-usual nose, eyes and it was no special -- if you should try to describe me it's very difficult. When you go out now, I'm sure you -- if you should describe me in front of the police, you wouldn't be able, I'm sure --

pretty sure, I'm so average. Average looking, such an average man, so you have to -- not to behave, but you had to feel one.

Q: But your demeanor is very quiet. Is that --

A: Is it?

Q: Well, that's what it appears to me.

A: I don't know --

Q: Is that unusu -- was that unusual in the resistance? Were people -- I mean, I suppose one often thinks about people who were in the resistance as very strong, and --

A: Yes.

Q: -- sort of -- and you're --

A: Well, to begin with I thought that I had the big heavy people, lumberjacks, but after awhile of course -- they might be very brainy, too, of course, too, but they -- they understood that the most important thing was what did you have in your head. That was a -- of course was the most important thing.

Q: Did it surprise you how easily you -- you're very innovative -- we -- yo -- do you know what I mean, you --

A: It's just -- it's interesting that you ask that question because after the war, I thought everybody had -- had the -- my experience. I thought that was usual. I didn't know that I had a very -- had -- had a very special job, or -- I thought everybody had the --

Q: That everybody was doing this?

A: Yeah, I thought so. So I was a little depressed when I found out that some things I had been -- wasn't all done. It was much -- I think that was maybe a good thing.

Q: Well, clearly it was a very good thing. But what did you think then when you realized that what you were doing was unusual? Did you --

A: Yeah, I felt it was -- ordinarily I knew that it was many saboteurs. I knew they had been lucky and done lots of things. So I knew I was one of them. So, easy.

Q: When you were in Stockholm in autumn of 1942, you were then made a liaison for all the new agents?

A: Yeah.

Q: In Oslo, is that right, and what did --

A: In Oslo, er --

Q: And what does that mean?

A: You know, the most important part of our Norwegian independent company number one, was not to be saboteurs in Norway, also but first of all instructors in a secret army. So most of them came, for instance, when I came by boat, into this west coast, I didn't -- was not in touch with them, but when they came, very often they came through Oslo because it was -- you had all the refugee routes, so you could come easily to -- over to Sweden at that way. When I had finished [indecipherable] I had to get -- go out to Sweden, and flown back to England. So then I had -- they knew I was in Oslo, so to me Oslo became such a small town. It is, but -- so I knew, and many people knew where I was -- I could tell [indecipherable] some people knew. And then they got hold on me, I could help them going out to Sweden, I could help them with a bicycle, I could help them with food, I could help renew his passport, anything. And I had country -- I had a couple of men with me. So we had the -- we had the -- all kinds of connections. A doctor, anything.

Q: If you would count up the number of connections you had in Oslo, how many people, do you think?

A: I-I think I met -- every day I met new people, up to 10 - 15, every day.

Q: Really?

A: It was incredible. When I came to England, I was interrogated by this [indecipherable] security police in London, outside the London. And I s -- some people, they voiced their opinion. Everybody is arrested, but not 24. He is a spy. And I was very glad, I -- I knew, I had a feeling that they -- they had to control that. So the policeman was put -- wi -- interrogating me and he said, write down all the names, you know, all leaders. I put 200 names on the paper. And he started. Why did you deal with that man? Because they had hundreds reports from many of these leaders already in England, so he could control. What did you -- why did you meet Petershim? What about the lawyer Hansen? What about Dr. So and So. And I could explain everything, naturally, how they were arrested and not me. So they finally said, okay, we let him go back to Norway. He -- we are hundred percent that he is good. But to me, when you are a sus -- when you are suspect and all that, it's very good that they -- I was so glad that they looked into this

Q: Mm-hm.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: We're going to take a break now.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Mr. Sonsteby, in October of 1942, a couple of agents were executed by the Gestapo, was that -- is that r -- let me ask it another way. Th -- w-was it very often that agents would get caught and tortured and executed?

A: Yes. If you take our -- this company which I mentioned to you, the freedom company in England, it was about 200 when the -- in the middle of the war, and -- and about 55 were taken and shot. Was quite a high percentage. Twe -- nearly 20 percent, maybe 250 boys. And sometimes you didn't hear any, but suddenly they were caught, it was an informer very often, and then they were taken to custody. First of all, to begin with they were tortured and they were sitting there in the prison. But later on it came an order, a Hitler order that they should be tortured and shot within 24 hours [indecipherable] the last -- from '43. Der Fuehrer bifel, it was called. The Hitler's bifel, or the Hitler's order. But it could happen. And of course, not only people from -- agents from England, but in the resistant groups, in Milorg for instance, if a man was taken there, he was very badly beaten and -- and that could happen once a week. Could be one that was taken and the whole -- and sometimes you could get -- arrest many who were tortured, and then they could give up, up to in one, two nights, and also it could have been almost 200 arrested. Some will be -- but most of them were taken into custody, and -- or -- or sent for new interrogations, and later on to Germany, to concentration camps to die. To work for two, three years and then off.

Q: Do you -- were there any particular incidences that come re -- that re -- you remember? Friends of yours who were working with you who were caught?

A: Yes, it was one very bad, I think, actually on t -- here was arrested in an apartment in Oslo, and he was sent down to [indecipherable] shoes, where we had our machine. At that time it was a

very, very tough prison, and it was German guards everywhere [indecipherable] escape, to escape was sum -- almost impossible. But we tried to get them out, but we thought we couldn't make it. So I had cook -- the cook there, they had a good cook, the Germans. And I asked him, if my friend wants a poison pill, how can he do it?

Q: "Well," he said, "he can stand by the window and be pretending that he's cleaning the window and he loses the little cloth piece, and then I can take it out, I'll put the pill in there." They did. So it worked, but some Germans had seen it, but the -- they couldn't prove it, so the cook was a very good cook, so they said, well, forget about it. But my friend got a pill. When he understood that we had given up all hope, he then thought to himself, now I try to flee from here. And he really almost made it. He came to the wall, and the -- jumped over the wall, he had come all the way out. Then a German soldier -- by the way it wa -- he was an under -- he was a [indecipherable] or something, and he took his rifle and shot him. So, it was very sad, but he had made it, but it was a very -- an ordinary thing, a -- a soldier wouldn't do that, but this time he did it. So it was very un -- unhappy thing. He was -- we were very close. That could be, of course, several -- actually we had also when I was in England, two of my best men, they wanted to do some anti-propaganda. It was a school in London what they called the anti-propaganda school, it's another English name for it, but they did some of that in Norway, trying to make the Germans believe that it was a secret opposition between German soldiers. I tried to pretend that. It was -- and then they got hold of, from one of the districts, the Milorg had taken to -- had hid two German soldiers, but their -- they pretended to be -- didn't want to do any more, they were getting out of the army, trying to get over to Sweden, they pretended. And my friends, they believed in it. And when I met these two guys, in Oslo, the Gestapo was there, and they were Gestapo people, so they were both shot, shot in the -- in a restaur -- in a café. So there's one le --

one died immediately, and the other one, Taloxen, he survived, but very -- hardly wounded, but then he was taken to hospital first and then to prison, and then he -- he hanged himself. He -- he knew he couldn't take it, he knew he would give in, give up some names, so he didn't want to take the chance. I was in England when I heard this through the -- we had the wireless operators, they wired it over to me, so I heard it. So then I had to pick up new people, two new people to take them back to Norway. That happened.

Q: Mm-hm. Tell me, did -- did the agents, other than you, who had hundreds of names in your head, did most of the agents only have a few names --

A: Yes, usually.

Q: -- because they would give -- oh.

A: They were not in my position, they were just coming in from England, doing their jobs, and back again.

Q: I see.

A: So that was a big difference. But they had names, of course. They could say, how did you come to Norway?

Q: Right.

A: Well, we came by ship.

Q: Ship, okay, that was [indecipherable] but who helped you when you came ashore? What was his name? Was it [indecipherable] who could it be? That was very dangerous, of course. So they knew enough names to make trouble.

Q: Did a lot of agents use aliases and keep changing their names, so -- so that --

A: No, they ha -- they were given a name in England, before they left.

Q: I see.

A: So that was another thing, I -- I had to send over to Stockholm, I had to send different forms for different passports, that was also a thing. And they were very well done in -- in England, but if you had taken a name, and that man had been a policeman in that district, then he would be shifted out. If you came after two years, then suddenly -- and those names hadn't been checked, one of the groups came right into [indecipherable]. He was [indecipherable] by a Nazi. It was a new man, and it was a -- a small shopkeeper that they also could use. He was a Nazi at that time. So all na -- everything, all information had to be very up to date. So that was always -- when they made out the forms, passports in England, it would -- could be a little more chance. I didn't have that chance in Norway. So our papers, they were more dependable.

Q: Let me ask you another question about sort of your everyday life. Where were you eating? Where did you eat lunch, where did you eat dinner?

A: Tha-That's a ver-very interesting question. When I stay at a place, I didn't want to be seen in daytime, so I usually went out in the morning, well, say nine o'clock, then I didn't come back until 10 - 11.

Q: At night.

A: Yeah. Because I didn't want to go in and out from that building. So then I had my luncheon for instance, down at the bakery. I had my dinner with a -- an old lady, a widow, where I could come. I -- but then when night came I always went back to my hiding place, and I knew it had to be shifted in, for instance, three months. Then the people could have seen me, and it was some -- after the war, some of the members of the Nazi party, they said, we didn't do anything wrong. No, but when they saw a man going in, out -- for instance with a rucksack every night, they reported it, and they had to report it. If you were a member of the party you had to report it, and that could be disastrous for us. Well, they didn't understand it, and you can explain it to them,

but that's the way of a traitor. Sometimes they are forced when they are in the organization. That was the same in Germany. When you were in the party, you were forced to be -- more or less to be a -- an informer. We had the same in Norway.

Q: And what were you doing from early morning until 10 o'clock at night? Were you actually going someplace to work?

A: Oh -- meeting people.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: All day. And we -- a couple of times my second in command, we had a apartment which we used in the day, in the daytime, [indecipherable] so we could sit down, have coffee and sit and talk and do our passports. We had a small -- we had a small office, which we had hired, so we have spent some time there. And then when we had -- were -- had a sabotage job done, we also -- they used, very often -- the night, of course. Sometimes it was daylight when we did our operations, but some -- usually nights. And then the -- the place where I lived in for about a year, then the -- the lady there, she understood because whenever it was some noise in the town, I had been away. So she said to me after the war that she thought that I maybe have carried -- carried the -- the -- the case for -- or the rucksack for the saboteur. She thought I had been a helper.

Q: Helper.

A: But she never believed that I was the man, you see. So it -- if -- she did never think that I was able to do any sabotage operations. So I was an ordinary man.

Q: Tell me about your conversations when you would sit with your -- with your colleagues. Were they practical conversations, were they political conversations, a combination?

A: Well, it was very often not so -- I would say funny things, we were joking very often. We had the -- the humor, very good. And all kinds of jokes were very popular and for instance, when I

should meet with the whole group of let's say six, seven, altogether, then we usually met at one of the big graveyards in Oslo. There was no money -- n-no people there, you know. And that could be a very good way. It's -- for instance, we never met in restaurants. We didn't never meet in cafés. It was too dangerous. We met in the open, and I can't recall that the whole group ever met in one apartment. Would be disastrous. So sometimes then, communication between us could be difficult, because of that. And that could -- could easily be some misunderstandings. So when we had one operation, we -- the first time the man that should help us, he had -- he had overslept. So he didn't show up, and we couldn't go because he had the fuse. Next time, he forgot the fuse, so we -- I was very angry with him, I've never been so angry in my life, I think. So, things like that could happen [indecipherable]. But was -- then made it more -- more simple, more so the nerves could help out with -- they would have -- some had difficulties with their nerves, of course, but I had the -- we had about 15 operations in '44, and then one of the fellows, he said, well, he s -- what will happen here? Can we come into trouble and get shot, or something. Then one other fellow said, no, 24 is with us. I had had so much luck, every time, and th-they were all -- we had no -- no -- then, 15 successful operations. So in a way, it was dangerous to think that way, but I had the luck.

Q: Mm-hm. So how would you communicate when you were going to do an operation, or you had a task that someone should do --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- how would you get the word out so that people would know to meet you in [indecipherable]

A: Oh, that's interesting. Telephones.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Telephones were not tapped in Oslo. I think the reason why they couldn't tap all telephones, they had the -- the -- Germans had the technicians, they had it, but they were dependent on Norwegian, on Norwegian technicians, all over you know. They call all -- these telephone boxes were different places. I don't think they found any technician that was a Nazi. So they didn't think of it, and they had thought they should do it, but they never did. So you could use the telephone, but of course you wouldn't say, now we are going to have sabotage. You didn't say that, but you say, we have to fetch the milk, or we meet in a shop because I got any more bread, or maybe a little goat cheese. That's Norwegian usually. So, telephone was very much used. Then, that day, they were [indecipherable] then we met, and I had all the information, all the intelligence, because I had been round there. I -- I could be always in the open, I was there [indecipherable] it. So what important in any military operation is intelligence before, and -- and intelligence very often can be wrong. But I could go there and see with my own eyes that it -- it was like that. So that was a ve-very important thing.

Q: Right.

A: But made out on the telephone, very often.

Q: Let me go back to January 1943. The -- apparently the -- the Gestapo was hunting for you, and you -- there was an incident when you came back to the apartment in which you were staying. Could you describe that incident?

A: Yes, how -- how would I know that I was wanted? I didn't know. For -- when they had the -- when that fellow had given up my name, real name, I didn't know it. So I had, at that time, about seven different hiding places. I had -- in the town, so I could use several -- several around the town. And then at one of these places I had a small house I had hired, or my friend, as a matter of fact, in -- small house in the gas station, you know, slow -- very near the -- the headquarters of

the police, and -- and then the -- I didn't know a thing, I came in from -- I'd been in the woods, I think had the little weekend, which I had in the middle of the week. So I came in, it was dark, and then when I came to the house, I thought -- everything had to be blinded at that time, every house, everything that no light should come out because of air raids, so on. So -- but I thought it wasn't well done in a way. I felt something must be wrong. So I didn't put the key in the door, then I would just be shot, because there was some people waiting for me. And I r-read about this afterwards, because Fehmer, the Gestapo chief, he wrote the report about this. And he was very, very angry with the people sitting there, because I dis -- I just -- they didn't catch me. I -- I rang the bell. Then I would -- knew I would have a split second to think what to do. And the -- the door was thrown open -- open immediately and I -- there was a -- I got a pistol right in my face. And the -- h-he asked me to come in, and I said, to hell I don't want to come in here. And I saw two Germans, in -- gendarmes wer -- they were, and with gun -- with rifles, and then he -- I tried to get my pistol, but then he -- that pistol was right in my face. So I just -- when he yell at me to come in, I said to hell I want to, and I hit the pistol, and the -- he -- the shot went in the air and then the -- I jumped out in the dark, and the two Germans shot, they all missed. So then the -- I knew it was people there, that -- I knew it was people that didn't like me. So then I went to the second, it was only a hundred yards away, my second place. Then started shooting there, then I got away there, and then the -- my es -- taxi driver who drove me at that time, he said -- he said, "I-I don't think you should go to any of these places." I said, "I have to see at least one more, then I know they are sitting everywhere, but I have to." And when I came down to that flat, they had put a safety chain inside, so I was warned. So I got away there. But then he -- my -- my taxi driver ans -- he said, no, no, no, please no more. So I then found an -- a new -- brand new place,

and had a good night's sleep, no trouble. So -- but that -- that night, many, many people are arrested, because it was [indecipherable] all over.

Q: Why wasn't two times enough for you? Why did you have to try the third?

A: Well, I had to know, are they sitting everywhere? What about the rest of them?

Q: And -- uh-huh.

A: I had to. I tho -- I had thought so, I had to be safe, that they were sitting there. Then I was pretty sure they were. And this guards, they were -- got into very big trouble in front of the Gestapo chief. They really got hell, because they had the --

Q: Because they missed you.

A: Yeah. And h-he said in his report, the worst thing isn't that they missed him, but they didn't report to me, so I lost -- I lost the whole thing. If they had reported immediately, we could have gone to some other places and got him, but they didn't dare to tell me that they had lost.

Q: I see.

A: So it was a good thing [indecipherable] frightened by the Gestapo chief, and they got hell.

Q: So tell me a couple of things. How did you find a hiding place that night? You had seven beautiful --

A: Yeah, I knew -- I knew about the merchant -- haberdasher, by the way, and I knew he was good -- or a good man, so I went up to his place, and I said I wanted to -- I was welcomed immediately. So you would all -- in a country like ours, we know all -- most people, anti-Nazis, you would be supported. But it was also a chance that they could have been all of -- arrested before that. You could go right into the place. But you had the -- you needed luck.

Q: Was this a circumstance where you dropped a book? Your diary, or am I wrong?

A: Oh yes, I -- I lost that in that little house, and -- but I s -- I knew I had put na -- two names on that notebook, so I put on some other clothes and after half an hour I went back there. I knew they wouldn't start over again, lost -- they lost track of me. So I just went right in -- almost outside and found it. Two days later, they -- it -- you had to try to think rationally, to say, why -- why should I keep staying there? I had disappeared, why should I -- well, then you could be safe.

Q: Did they chase you?

A: Yes, but that would be done in that minute. But I disappeared in the darkness, it was impossible.

Q: Were you afraid at all that -- at that moment when they shot -- shot at you?

A: Well, I was -- I was angry.

Q: You were angry?

A: Yes. I -- of course, yes [indecipherable] stupid people. They started up this. And I had no respect for that fellow that came up there, I -- and we're -- I -- I saw he was nervous, could see it immediately, he's standing with a pistol like that, you know. Very few people are quiet in that moment, I'm pretty sure.

Q: So is that why it was so -- easier for you to hit his arm --

A: Yes.

Q: -- because he in fact was shaking [indecipherable]

A: Yes, a-and it was within my reach.

Q: Yes.

A: That's not a good thing to do when you're try to hold up a man.

Q: Now, let me ask you something. You were suspicious when you walked -- this wasn't outside, you were -- you have to go inside to the apartment, am I right?

A: No, no, the stair --

Q: Or was it outside?

A: -- it was a small house.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The stairs, right into the open.

Q: Okay, so --

A: So I was standing in front there, it was a little opened, just a little wa -- jump down three stairs.

Q: So if you were suspicious, why did you ring the bell?

A: Well, I wasn't sure. I had a feeling, and you couldn't stop there, you had to --

Q: You had to find out.

A: You had to know. I could have been wrong, I could have been -- I was right.

Q: So, did this mean -- this set of circumstances mean that Fehmer, the -- the Gestapo head knew more than you had thought he knew?

A: No [indecipherable]

Q: So you have -- so now you --

A: But he knew -- he knew more or less that I knew most people in the -- the leaders.

Q: Right.

A: He knew that.

Q: And he now had your name?

A: But he called -- he called me a -- he thought I was a spy, no, and -- an English spy or -- or from the government that had left Norway, which was bad enough for him. So -- but when he lost track, he -- he -- then he had my father, he thought that was good enough to stop me. But I

don't know if he -- but I -- he didn't have any [indecipherable] about me really, until we met after the war.

Q: Mm-hm. Were you able to keep track of your father when he was sent to the concentration camp and hear how he was, or [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, and the thing was that he was sent to a concentration camp in Oslo --

Q: Yes.

A: -- outside Oslo. So I knew when the car -- they were put to some work in Oslo. So I knew he was coming with that car, but with German guards, of course. I had to be way out of sight of it. So I knew that. And my -- I had to try to convince my mother that I was in England. So I corresponded with her through Stockholm. So she got letters from a relative in Stockholm, saying that she used another name -- name for a girl. And she -- I wrote her, she knew it was from me, from England. I was in Oslo, but I pretended so she -- I tried to make her believe that I was in England. But at one time she came to the bakery. I almost met her in the stairs, but she was sitting in this next room in the bakery [indecipherable] face, all the time. Sh -- I was in the next room. But that was just what could happen.

Q: And you didn't want her to know because you didn't want her to be afraid?

A: Exactly, exactly, and get mixed into it. But first of all, they were afraid, you know, what will happen. So that was an idea to keep that way.

Q: And the Nazis never picked up these letters, the Germans?

A: No.

Q: They'd never detected anything?

A: Well, they had the -- the first night she was in the -- when I worked these different places, they were there -- she stayed at one of these places, and the Gestapo came there during the night, and so he met my mother. He knew it was my mother, so --

Q: Fehmer met her, or --

A: Yeah, Fehmer himself.

Q: Himself.

A: The Gestapo chief, he came himself to that place, and -- i-in the night. Early -- usually like came three, four o'clock in the morning so they could do that, p-people wouldn't wake up, and her -- the friend that she was with, she was taken to the -- the concentration camp for about two years, but because Fehmer asked her did I ever come there, and she said no. And then he -- for that lie, you will be -- come to prison, he said. But my wife was -- my -- my mother was left there.

Q: Why do you think that was the case?

A: Well, a --

Q: Do you think your father was enough for him?

A: Yeah, he -- yeah. I guess so.

Q: And what was the name of the camp, was -- wa -- that your father was in?

A: That was Grini.

Q: Yeah.

A: Grini, G-r-i-n-i, Grini.

Q: Right.

A: Concentration camp, a -- right outside Oslo.

Q: Now, when did you figure out that this man named Monsen was --

A: An informer.

Q: An informer. Was that around this time? After your father was taken?

A: Yes. He was sent out, and was done in a very smart way by the security pol-police. They were -- the Germans were all afraid of all kinds of sicknesses, so they put people in showers, to have bath or showers, always. So they had a man, wa -- one of the prisoners were heading in a bath, taking care of all that. They put in an informer who took care of all the prisoners. And of course prisoners would think [indecipherable] why don't you talk to my -- he's also a prisoner. So they gave him two, three, names. A friend of mine was given up, a-and he -- then he was -- came out from prison, pretended they were releasing him. So he came up to that [indecipherable] that he had heard that from other prisoners, of course, because they believed in him. He was just one of them. So they got a telephone, and he telephoned my friend, and he wanted to meet my friend, and we had to meet him, because it could be very valuable information from other prisoner friends. So we had to take a chance. Of course, we didn't know exactly how it was, but it could happen. So we met him in the evening, outside in Oslo, about eight o'clock in the evening, very dark in winter. And he started to tell us greetings from two people, which were -- later, by the way, died in Germany, in concentration camps. One was a [indecipherable] manager in Shell company, and then -- but we -- we just didn't -- we had a feeling that he was not in the resistance movement, we had a -- the way he said it, then we understood that -- we were pretty sure that he was an informer. So Fehmer, the Gestapo chief, he was reporting this afterwards, we have it in his report. And he -- he said that the -- the man was stupid, and my -- my man, he was stupid enough to give up his telephone number. And that cost him his life. So we won at that time.

Q: So you had Monsen killed?

A: Yeah.

Q: And who did -- who shot him? [indecipherable] I don't know whether --

A: What a

Q: -- was he shot?

A: Yeah, he was shot.

Q: He was shot.

A: Part of the group. Some other --

Q: And is this in the open, or do they --

A: No, at night. They went into his bi -- apartment at night, because they had -- had his telephone number, they could find his address. Otherwise he had -- could have told -- he didn't get any names from us, but he was very, very dangerous.

Q: How does one make a decision as to who will assassinate the informer?

A: Well, if he hadn't been taken that evening, it had been too late, next morning it would -- he would report to Fehmer and he would say maybe and maybe could come with some tracks, you know.

Q: No, what I mean is how do you decide who's going to kill him?

A: Oh well, that was a --

Q: Is -- there's a volun --

A: -- oh, it had to be one of the -- they were disciplined, they had -- they knew what it cost. So one of the group would get that order.

Q: But they -- it wouldn't be voluntary necessarily, it would be, you should be the one to do it?

A: Yeah --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- yes, it could be.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Of course, if you had said, but th -- I knew. This was part of the game.

Q: Of the game.

A: That was our enemies. When you are in -- at the front, you see the enemy over there, but here is -- you don't see him, you just feel him, you -- it's much more difficult. So it's just a -- a s -- German soldiers fire at American soldiers, just that.

Q: Did you -- was it -- was there ever a circumstance where -- where people doing that -- it was -- afterwards they suffered a great deal, even though they knew they were killing someone who was an enemy, it was -- was it difficult for people to do it, do you think?

A: Well, I think for Norwegians it was. And after the war, when I have been sitting in a -- in a official bureau, taking care of all the disabled veterans, and when we discussed this, if a man had -- had a very bad destiny, and needed a pension, for instance, a disabled person pension, then this would mean something, because of his nerves, that he had been through that. It was mentioned as a very hard thing to do. On the front it's maybe a little different, but -- but you were also face to face in the front in a war, so --

Q: But this is more face to face, you're going into somebody's --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- apartment, into a living --

A: It is.

Q: -- it's different.

A: It is.

Q: Right.

A: So, it was considered a very tough thing [indecipherable]

Q: In May of 1943, you're -- you're sent to Britain.

A: Yes, for --

Q: Now, have you been trying to get to Britain for awhile?

A: No, I hadn't -- I hadn't time.

Q: No.

A: I had no time. I had to do my ossage -- office job for them in Oslo. But then when it was during the dark hours and days, it was easier, but then I was warned by the -- our secret -- we have also secret police agents, few of them, they ha -- they were a group, and they warned me, and they said, you better get out this summer. They are after you all the time, so please get out of Norway for the summer. Then I went over to Stockholm, and I was asked inter -- invited to come over to this special operations executive training camps, trained in that company, so we --

Q: That's the SOE group.

A: -- yeah, and we then reached the independent company, number one, that was the name. Also under Norwegian control.

Q: But when you go over there, they do a very heavy security check. This is when you describe you're writing down the [indecipherable]

A: Yes, and I -- I could -- they -- they said to me, don't use your name over here, it could be German spies. So that -- they asked me to put ano -- another name, the Erling Fjeld name. So I came over as Erling Fjeld, it was only two people in the British secret service that knew it -- security force, that knew who I was, and I -- so I had to pretend to be Erling Fjeld for six m -- four months. Born in '16.

Q: 1916?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you're a little old.

A: First March 16.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was the -- the date, I remember it very well. That wasn't my real birthdate.

Q: Right. And where -- where was Erling born?

A: I was born in Oslo.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And my father, he had a -- a small shop.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I think his -- his wife -- and my mother was Margda, I thought that was a nice name, so I built up the whole thing there. So I had to go back to swe -- to Norway, and then when I came to the border, Swedish border, I came there as a refugee called Erling Fjeld. And then I was given the papers in Stockholm, and then I was wanted also in Sweden. So that's why I, in one of them, that Erling Fjeld picture, I put in -- on the scarf, and a couple of window glasses, and -- just to be safe, and I went through that control in Sweden without being discovered.

Q: Tell me, when you were in this training -- wa -- a few things I would like to know. When you have this new identity, and you can create my father, my mother, where I was born.

A: Yeah.

Q: When people ask you things about your life, do you make up everything? Wer --

A: No, no, that you could use your ordinary life.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Take -- pick another town.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: For instance, you could pick a town on the west coast, which was also industrial town, could have been just the same. So you had to pick things that's real so you -- you didn't need to -- to make it up. You tried to find things tha -- that was there. So you couldn't always -- that was the way to remember.

Q: Tell me about the training. After a few weeks, you passed the security check, right? And then in June, you go to Scotland, I think?

A: Yeah, and we had a training camp with only Norwegians.

Q: Only Norwegians.

A: Yeah, on that -- that camp. The others were all people coming from all Europe, from occupied countries, but here we were together, and about 30 men for two months, very hard, tough training, day and night. And we had learned all kinds of sabotage.

Q: That was the -- that was the point of the training --

A: Yeah, yeah --

Q: -- sabotage.

A: -- by then.

Q: Now --

A: I had difficulties over there because I hadn't the right discipline to be in the --

Q: Yes, can you explain that?

A: -- I had a little trouble there. Well, I -- they didn't know that I had been in the resistance movement for two, three years as one of the leaders. They didn't know that, they thought I was a young fellow coming. Erling Fjeld, they never heard about him, so they tried to make him be a little more disciplined. But I had difficulties. I -- but a -- first of all, so I didn't do very well in the s -- that school, but I had the best marks in sabotage. I knew that was what I needed. The rest

of them, I could actually teach them. So that's why, between the leader and me it was a little trouble.

Q: But your main purpose was to learn explosives --

A: Exactly.

Q: -- anyway, so that you could do that.

A: The rest I knew.

Q: Yeah.

A: I knew they couldn't -- he couldn't learn me anything. He didn't know. And he didn't know I had been in resistance for two and a half year.

Q: And does he want you out of there? Does he try and sort of flunk you?

A: Yes, he said I wouldn't -- I -- I couldn't be used. But when I came to London, I knew, of course, so -- so it's not often that it -- it -- it -- use -- useful man can be a good -- good pupil.

Q: And who -- you had a friend, how -- Haugland is his name, Knut? Who --

A: Yes, I had a very good friend from my hometown. He was later on the wireless operator on the Kon-Tiki fleet, the raft.

Q: A -- a what kind of operator?

A: He was wireless operator together with [indecipherable] later on, because he needed some relaxation after the war, because he had so much headache. So he joined [indecipherable] on the Kon-Tiki. He lost all his troubles with -- after that trip with the raft, Kon-Tiki. So Knut and I, we were close friends from Rjukan, and then he knew me, of course, he knew my name and everything. So he helped the leadership in England to get me over, because to send people back, it cost lots of money, you know, it -- it -- you had to send what they pretend to be the best. So -- but the leadership in London, they -- they knew, so they wanted me to go back.

Q: It wasn't so easy to get back though, was it?

A: No, it was -- you had to really -- you know, they put up a plane, it was terribly expensive, was a big thing, you know, a four engine bomber, Halifax bomber, or could be an [indecipherable] American, and sent back to Norway. So they had to try to find the best to send, or the ones they knew could do something.

Q: So you parachuted back --

A: Yes, back --

Q: -- after a couple tries, back into --

A: Yes.

Q: And you parachuted with weapons, or --

A: With all kinds of weapons.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I had Knut, we came together.

Q: You and Knut?

A: Knut Haugland, and we had in our planes, we had a -- almost two tons of weapons with us, in small parachutes that was dropped together with us, two tons of weapons.

Q: And where in Norway would they be dropped? Towards the coast?

A: That was the very -- in the middle of Norway, called -- a very neat place called Kongsberg. And then I dropped right there in the mountains.

Q: And there there were people -- agents who were picking these things up, right?

A: Yes, we did that, we had some of the farmers came with sledges, you know, in winter and picked them up by horses, sledges. And they had them down to -- to the road, the main road, where we could pick them up. For instance, in my way I -- I had the very close friend in the -- in

the gas company, and we had their truck, their tank truck, and we filled -- put all the weapons in that truck -- tank wagon, and people -- when we came running, came on the road, they didn't believe it could be weapons on the tank, you know, in the tank. Thought it was gasoline, so now we could be fooling the Germans, not the opposite. So some fun -- sometimes we're -- we're the cat, and then they're mices.

Q: So when you ga -- came back, once -- did you go back to Oslo after you had parachuted into Kongsberg?

A: Yes, I go -- went immediately back, and I did nothing in the first two weeks. I want to get to know a -- all -- to be -- find out what had happened, so --

Q: So were you away for a year?

A: Yeah, then I had been --

Q: Almost a year?

A: No, I had been away for -- for five months, you know.

Q: Five months.

A: Yeah. So now I was back where I could -- I really liked to be.

Q: So after a couple of weeks, did you make the first decision about the first sabotage?

A: Yeah, I stayed two -- two weeks before, so I get used to the climate. A clam -- a clam -- a [indecipherable]. So I knew then I could start again. Met my people, what's the situation now, where are the controls, how can you -- where can you stay, where -- what can you do? I was -- so I was just relaxing there for 14 days, then I could start over again.

Q: And where did you stay? Did you get a new set of --

A: You know, then I stayed with a -- a doctor at one of the hospitals, big hospitals. And then I -- I was to find a place for my friend, Knut Haugland as a wireless operator. So he's put -- came to

that same hospital, a -- he took over my place, and he was in -- sending all his messages on the top floor of the hospital. And then I found some other places, new places, another five, 10 new places where I can disappear completely, and -- under some name, some new name, could be Knutsen too. That's why one day we were very, very -- little stupid, because we had both put the name Knutsen. So when I met my friend, he said to me, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Knutsen." "And I'm Knutsen." I said. So then it was Knutsen one and Knutsen two. But in -- in two months we had different names again.

Q: Was your first operation the bombing of the labor office?

A: No, it's -- yeah, yeah, I would say so, it was the first where I was -- had that chance, and that was in open daylight. You had --where they had conscripted the [indecipherable] meeting the next day, next morning, about nine o'clock and they wanted us to blow up the place --

Q: Can you expla --

A: -- in the evening.

Q: Can you explain why it was so important to -- to do something at the Labor Office? What were the Nazis trying to do at this time?

A: See, they were trying to deal with a lot of Norwegians, several thousands, could be quite a percentage for all the youngsters. And they wanted them to be conscripted for labor. But it was a concealed conscription for army, for German army. And the long week -- it was very hard to stop it, it was, of course that was sent over the radio, BBC radio, Norwegian broadcast to Norway, please don't go in there, don't -- don't report. But if they didn't report, they -- all the youth, 18 -- between 18 and 22, they would be fetched -- they would be taken by the police, would -- could be shot or put in a concentration camp. So it didn't help them to refuse. But in Oslo they were supposed to meet 3,000 in '44, spring '44, 19th May, they were supposed to meet. 18th, the day

before, I was asked -- it was my first job, I was asked to -- they ene -- in the evening, same evening, blow up the office, and it was in -- in Norway it's very light in May, it's -- almost all night. So about eight o'clock in the evening we went up there, and had a -- some explosives, 14 pounds of explosives. And then we just -- in a small parcel. And then th -- we thought it was very easy to do this, but it was about 20 people working overtime, because they should have 3,000 people next morning. So I said to my friend, I cannot kill these people, I don't -- we cannot do that, that's not our job. Our job is to ruin it. So I shouted -- went up to -- in the house, and I shouted as high as I could, get the hell out of there. Two minutes the house will be -- the whole thing will be blown up. And they all got out in a split second, more or less. All of them. And when we came out, it was only less than one minute before it exploded, so -- then the next morning, nobody could meet there. I had a feeling that the -- I'd heard from some historians that three people went instead of 3,000. And they had troubles because the stairs wasn't there any more. So we were lucky. And this helped. Next day they knew three -- 3,000 should meet, but they had no place to meet. So that was start, we made several sabotage operations s-so we could help this, and it was stopped, finally. After six months, they gave up. So we -- we sent a ti -- sent in 5,000 youngsters [indecipherable] means quite a lot to people [indecipherable] three million. Quite a big percentage.

Q: Were there a number of sabota -- was the Labor Office in Oslo the major --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- center? But there must have been centers all over.

A: No -- yeah, that was always done. But no -- Oslo was so terribly important, because everything was centerized. The politicians today say -- they complain that we are centerized today, but at that time it was all centerized. Every town in Norway, if they needed even change

their house, you had to go right to the -- to the headquarters in Oslo. So it meant so much. So this was mostly done in Oslo.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So it meant very much for the whole country. You could use a telephone all over the country. So it spread.

Q: Really?

A: That somebody was now hitting the Gestapo.

Q: Right.

A: And they were disappearing, hitting, ruining for them, and disappeared, all the time. So of course it was -- was not very nice for the Gestapo, really. They got into trouble.

Q: Okay, we'll take a break now.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Mr. Sonsteby, before we go on and talk about some other sabotage operations, let's get a picture of how many Germans there are to every Norwegian in -- in the country at this time.

A: We were, at that time, three million people. And we had in from '42 - '43, we had about 250,000, later on more than 300,000 troops. It was 10 percent of all the population. And if you take the age of -- the military age, which was an important 17 - 18 to 32 - 34, then it was -- in southern Norway it was about three Germans to a Norwegian. And in north Norway, very little -- it was not so many people, we had -- it could be about 10 Germans to a Norwegian in that age group. So [indecipherable] swarmed in [indecipherable]

Q: So when you were walking around in Oslo during your daily meetings --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did you always see a lot of troops?

A: Oh yes, all the time. But I didn't care, I thought that they didn't touch me, and I didn't touch them. So, just like that, especially you were always -- all the controls, you know, and when you consider Norwegians, they were being traitors, they had the -- some of them had the control. They were one man with a machine pistol, and it was five others, youngsters, Nazi boys with rifles. And then you were stopped, they looked in your pockets and in your -- your vest -- what do you call these small things you have? Suitcases, and briefcases and looked through them, opened. And if you saw them, and you tried to get away, and you didn't stop, you would be shot. They shot immediately these youngsters, young Norwegians. That was very bad to see, you know. And they were Nazis and they didn't understand what they did. So it could even be on the [indecipherable] gosh that man -- if you then just moved another, they would stop you. And if you didn't stop immediately, got shot.

Q: A -- A few weeks after you bombed the Labor Office, you were supposed to blow up an insurance company building, why?

A: Well, they used some kind of a -- in order to call in people, they had to use what you call -- I won't -- I don't know what you call it in English, but all the insurance companies had -- is a kind of starting up of data system. They could sort out things on new machines from the States. And it was, of course, the company that had this, that was IBM. At that time in Norway, it had another name, the company, and they had these machines. And these machines were now put in to sort out people to find the addresses. They were sorted like anything is. It was a first kind of data -- data machine, I think, data. And then the Germans and the Norwegian -- the Nazi government, they wanted to use this. I got the order to take it, to destroy it before they could start. So the first -- the machines, they were -- they were in a nice shop in Oslo, and one morning we heard that it -- they will be taken over by the Gestapo. So the day before, we came there, and we had a big stone through the window, and had three small charges of -- of explosives, and there were no more after a minute. Then we disappeared completely. The next day they -- we had forgotten a big machine up in the insurance company. And then we had got the new order to go up there and take that. And then they had put four guards around the machine with a police dog. Now they were sure it will not be taken, and the Gestapo and the -- they were hundred percent sure nobody could come there. So it was impossible, but we found a new way. If it had been now we would have maybe used a helicopter, but you didn't have helicopter at that time, so we had to crawl over three, four roofs, until we reached that building and got down there, and the -- there we knew it was -- the machine was under the -- the dining room, or the room where the fella -- the employees had their meal. And during the night we came, we reached it, and put the explosive, that would 10 -- it was a delayed bomb, 10 minutes, and then we went back, we -- if you then

went into the streets about 10:30, you would be taken, it was German guard all over town during the night. Also because of these sabotage operations. If we came into the street, we would be arrested immediately, our age. So we wen-went into the next building and had a fine view to where the explosion will go off and 10 minutes afterwards, again we -- we didn't want to take lives, so we called them again on the telephone, we said, two minutes, you'd better get out. And they knew from experience now, so they all got out, even with the dog, and then it was blown up, the whole thing. And next morning they couldn't find anybody, no track whatsoever, which was a very important thing. We didn't lose people, I didn't lose any of my men, and it was a -- should called a success.

Q: You must have driven them crazy.

A: I think it was not so easy to bear. Not to find a track, it was impossible. And of course it meant that the people also, they didn't talk. They knew they had -- shouldn't talk about it. Of course it was wonderful for them to hear about it, and when I came the next day, I went down in the district and talked to people and they said, oh, terrible people that's done this. So -- but it was very popular, of course, within the population because they knew it was a fight towards the Gestapo first of all, and to stop this conscription of our young persons. So in -- in the course of '44 summer, autumn, it was all stopped. They gave up. And another thing, politically, Germans sometimes found that these Norwegian Nazis weren't always so good. So they were -- they were now annoyed that they didn't make it and put [indecipherable] Gestapo in trouble. So they were -- it could be a little -- for us it was very important that it was a g -- not good relations between the Germans and the Nazi Norwegians. That could also be a point.

Q: Now, I guess it was about a month later, in the Lysaker factory, there -- you -- you blew up, was June 28th, 1944, there was another bombing that you did. Was it following that that the Nazis retaliated in terms of the ration cards?

A: Yes, every Norwegian over 16 years old had to have a ration card. And then these youngsters, they were all -- they were all refused to fetch the cards. And then we -- I was asked to steal a few, to real -- make it a hold-up.

Q: Now wait a minute, wait a minute, ex -- go back a little bit.

A: Yes --

Q: What were -- what were the Nazis doing with the cards that if you --

A: They refused to give the cards to -- to the youngsters of 18 - 19 - 20 - 22.

Q: Because they wanted to conscript them?

A: Exactly.

Q: I see.

A: Then they would have to report. If they didn't get a card, they had to report, that was the way.\

Q: Okay.

A: And then I was asked to -- to put up a hold up, to take over 75,000 ration -- ration cards, and that was one and a half ton. So it was not a pocket theft, it was a real [indecipherable]. So we -- it was coming out from the printing shop with guards, the whole truck, and we stopped it. In Norway y-you have a han -- it's right driving you know, we have left and right, Norway was right. And then you can stop the car. My car came and stopped the other one, because it had stopped because of the right of way. So then we -- I took over the car. I just opened the front door of the truck and said, let me have a place here, I don't want to sit here in front. So I put my

gun in the side of the watchman, of the guard, and he moved immediately. And at the same time, two of my friends went up on the -- on the platform, on the truck, where it was two other guards, so the car was ours. We took it over, the whole thing, with the one and a half ton of ration cards. That was -- then we met another car, which I didn't know the number plates, I didn't know anything, I knew exact at 9:30 we will meet another car, I stopped there, and i -- all ration card got taken over to the other truck, and that disappeared. If we were now arrested or taken, we didn't know where to find the cards. They could have tortured us, but we didn't know. That was also important at that time. So --

Q: So then what happened?

A: Then the -- some of our leaders, they had a telephone to the authorities, one way line. And the-they told the authorities, now we have -- we have the cards, we want to make a deal with you. And they say, what's your -- what's your address? Well, we haven't got any address. What's your telephone? We haven't got any telephone. But we want you to give a new order that the youngsters should have the cards -- have their ration cards. And th -- how -- why did they give in? Yes, they gave in because at this time, Germans were building up that most important fort in Europe. That's the strongest fort in Norway -- Norway from this time on. So if it had been an invasion, had been terrible to take back Norway. Would have cost millions, maybe. And then we said, we are going to send these cards all over, sell them to make the black market way and it will ruin your situation, the whole station here. What about people working on your fortress, and all that? They would have no -- no food, nothing. It would be terrible. It would ruin the whole situation here. And then the Nazi government, Norwegian, they had to give in, because the Germans would be furious if their laborers, all those, didn't get any food at all, it will stop all work. So they gave in. We had won. That was in September '44. They tried once more to

conscript the lady -- the women, but that didn't work at all. So we didn't hear any more. And our office, without address, without telephones, just disappeared from the Nazis.

Q: And then once they agreed, you gave back the cards?

A: Yes. Of course, this was done by another group, but I worked closely with them. I didn't do that part of it, but my part was to get hold of the cards.

Q: But that giving back process could also be dangerous because they could then catch the group

A: Oh yes, that -- you are quite right, but the way we did it, well we just gave them first 20,000 cards and then they -- we said, you can pick them up outside the bank, for instance.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then part of it we put in small parcels, and on top of them we wrote, dangerous explosives. And it was put round in Oslo and it was a hell of a trouble for the police, the Nazi police, and they didn't dare to touch them. So they sent for a company outside, an -- German specialists to -- on the -- to take over, and then they opened it very carefully, and it was ration -- ration cards. So we had a little fun also. But of course we were -- man -- many people into this, and -- but it was all coordinated very well from the top.

Q: Now, in s -- in August of 1944, there was a bombing at Korzewall, with the airplane parts?

A: Yes, that was an important place, it was very hard to find because the German camouflaged it with a very big [indecipherable] very big, you know, the biggest in Norway. And half of it was put into stock of all kinds of spec-special re-repair parts for -- for fighter planes, Messerschmitt. And they had also a-about -- about 20 fuselage that was there, to put -- put up to the airport later on, and we got to know it, and it was very hard to know where it was and what they did, but we had to get intelligence, and one of my friends, he got to know all of it. So then we went in there, and the part -- the Norwegian part was no guarded, strangely enough. Was one guard, which I by

the way took -- had -- took hold of when we came there in the night and pacified him. And then we went in there and then went into the German part in the basement, through three fences, and put down about 300 pounds of dynamite. We blew up the whole place. And I think it wasn't very nice for them to use their spare parts in Norway. And the same had to be done with ball bearing. Ball bearing was terribly important for any nation. And Swedish -- Sweden had the best ball bearings in the world, you know, they had also a small place in Oslo, which was also blown up. Another thing what -- how -- how would we know what to -- what take, of course, when we talk about submarines. Submarines use batteries. Submarines batteries, that means sulfur, the acid. And we had two of them in Norway, so the way we could hit the submarine weapon to stop the submarines was to ruin these two acid factories, and they were stopped. So they couldn't produce any more, they were ruined for the rest of the war, and then it was not -- very few batteries coming from Norway to -- norw -- to submarines, because at the coastline in Norway, during the war you could hide every nation's fleet, submarines and everything, in Norwegian fjords. You could have the whole -- the world could be placed into Norwegian fjords. And they did, of course, all those submarines, they disappeared in Norwegian fjords. So they were -- it was very important to hit them in a way of taking away sulfur, as in for batteries. Then you had to have experts to help you [indecipherable]. But when we talked about Haugland, he was also wireless operator on the heavy water operation, and on my hometown. And so he had a [indecipherable] experience. Two s-s-small town -- two small town boys were also there.

Q: You said you pacified the guard. Is that another word for killing him?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Just to hold him up, and just keep watching him, or one man had to watch him all the time. But the trouble with that, of course, if he doesn't start screaming. And people maybe done that, without helping it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So that could be a -- then, when you hear about guards being -- you can shoot him, because of the noise. So when you hear about that, it's a -- a necessity, because they can give a noise, scream or something like that, but he -- luckily he didn't. So he was a -- sent out --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Afterwards. So we tried to be very careful with the civilian at all. It was not our -- we were no terrorists. The Germans called us, of course, terrorists, but I -- I -- I don't know any type or [indecipherable] which was terrorism.

Q: And in that operation at the air -- at Korzewall, there were cleaning women who used [indecipherable]

A: Yes, that was another difficult thing, of course, when you come into a place like that, if you had -- if you had the cleaning womens and I had pacify them in a way that -- I said that we were now -- you know, on all buses, you have different advertising, and I said I was a painter, so I should paint some of the buses with the -- and they believed me. I -- I looked very innocent, and they said, he's a nice painter. So then I -- then I -- when I saw all the explosives being carried in, I said, this is meat. So this is -- go to your -- your people in the -- with all the buses [indecipherable] it will be fine. So they believed me, but when they talked, and -- but then I had to tell them, I'm very sorry, but it -- now it will be blown up, you come with us. So -- but they could stop the whole operation, you know, if they had started. So that was not a way to be innocent, try to make people believe.

Q: And what was their response when you said to them, essentially, I was lying to you, it's now going to be blown up, get out. Were they angry at you, were they frightened of you?

A: Oh no, they were frightened.

Q: They were frightened.

A: Like hell, of course, which is understandable, under -- but they got out. They couldn't -- nobody hurt them afterwards.

Q: Yeah.

A: They couldn't do anything. But people, when they see and hear about explosions, you know, fuses burning, it's very understandable that they are frightened.

Q: Right.

A: It's -- it's a good thing, I think.

Q: Were you with Haugland at the heavy water operation, or no --

A: No.

Q: -- was he alone? I mean, was --

A: I was then in Oslo, and they were trained in -- specially on that target in England, by some Norwegian professors that had really installed the heavy water plant at Rjukan. It's part of the electr -- electrolyses. That's part of it, you get the heavy water from the --

Q: And was he hurt at that operation?

A: No, no, he just -- he -- he was -- the operat -- operator [indecipherable] to keep the [indecipherable] London advised all the time, do they go in now?

Q: Right.

A: And then he had to keep away so he could, if they had been lost, he had the report, so he was keeping in touch with the -- England all the time, during operation.

Q: I wanted to ask you about one more sabotage before we went back to England, which -- your group became known as the Oslo gang --

A: Yes.

Q: -- right a-around this time, in 1944.

A: Or also detachment, I said the name then, but --

Q: Detachment?

A: Yeah, in Norway it's a gang, see, which is -- can be --

Q: I see.

A: -- misunderstood, I think.

Q: But in England it was known as the Oslo detachment?

A: Yeah, that --

Q: I see.

A: -- was the British name for it.

Q: But you -- there was a decision made to destroy thousands of gallons of oil.

A: Yeah, that was, of course, also necessary because -- especially the special oils for -- could be lubricating oils, which was very important, very scarce. You know, the Germans, they really, in the last part, they had no lubricating oil, they had no gasoline, it was just -- some part of their Panzer, you know, couldn't work because they hadn't any more -- so that, it was very scarce. So to ruin any gasoline tanks, or lubricating, was very important, that was part of how you could hit the Germans. But as I said before, the real effort in Norway's war was the sailors and the -- or that was the real thing, but so -- but everything you could do against the occupying powers in Norway would, of course help -- help out.

Q: So you destroyed about 50,000 gallons of oil in that operation, am I right?

A: Well, it could be, but it was more from the small groups, they did many, all over Norway.

Q: On that day?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Not -- not on that day, but [indecipherable] occasionally.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was done by several groups. So I -- I don't know how much it would be, enormous. It was ruined, especially all the stocks in Norway.

Q: Now why did you leave Oslo in November of 1944? You went back to be more highly trained than you were?

A: Ah -- yeah, I wanted to report now in England, in London. So I -- then I went over with a n -- third name. My name was this time Harald Sorensen. When I came to England I had good papers, when I came to the security police -- in England you can think in a wartime, security police, and I got in now a-at the thi -- in the third, after third name, Harald Sorensen, electrical engineer. So then it was a very few people that, of course -- in there, so we [indecipherable] that I was let in. Could be a dangerous [indecipherable], I guess.

Q: Mm. So you took a cour -- an STS 17 course, is that right?

A: Yeah, that means -- no, I didn't, I -- I went up there because my course that had been before, so I just reported over there, to -- to try what happened, what about the experience did I have, with the things I had learned in Great Britain. So that was a special course in sabotage.

Q: Now at -- during that period of time when you were in London, you met with the crown prince, and the king?

A: Yes.

Q: That the case?

A: Because --

Q: And what was that meeting about?

A: The sa -- the king heard about this country, and of course he had not been in Norway for four winters now. And when he heard that I was there for the -- number 24, he knew. And then he asked me to come up to there to see him. Of course, it was very nice to meet them. And then the king said to me, “What’s your name today, Erling Fjeld?” They laughed a little, you see, and then I said, “Now today, your majesty, my name is Harald Sorensen, electrical engineer.” And he -- I -- if I had invite him to go back to the resistance in Norway, he may have followed. But he was a tall man, so it would be really strange if you had seen the Norwegian king up and down the main street in Oslo.

Q: Right.

A: But he -- he had really en-enjoy this, of course. But on the other hand, if -- when we talk about Oslo and all, he was nearly crying. It was very serious to him, but he couldn’t go back, and then -- but then after six months, in June ’45, he could go back.

Q: What was that like for you to sit with the king of your country? Was that extraordinary?

A: Oh, very, very special, of course. So I then didn’t realize it, I think, because all things were quite serious, so -- but it -- it was -- it was nice.

Q: Was the crown prince there as well, during that?

A: Not at that day.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The other day. I met him with the others. Then he was commander in chief for all forces --

Q: For all forces.

A: -- Norwegian forces.

Q: I see.

A: From that time.

Q: Then you went back to Oslo in December of 1944?

A: Yes, with two new men, two new --

Q: And is this a --

A: -- members from the Oslo detachment.

Q: And what's the situation for resistance when you come back? I mean, is it harder, are the -- are the Germans being --

A: Oh, it -- it was harder, and the Gestapo was very hard, it was -- it was terribly hard, terribly tough. Many, many people are shot, many people are put in concentration camps and now we heard more than rumors what happened to them in Germany, but not exactly what happened. We knew it was tough, but even in December we didn't realize. It wasn't realized before the Americans came to the first camps. So we -- we couldn't believe it, and in, of course, summer, it was not easy because they knew I was one of their leaders, and I very often got telephones, have you heard from my s-son, have you -- have you -- my father, and -- and the -- it was about 10,000, you know, that's -- for a nation of three millions, it's quite a lot. But it couldn't -- some people -- some countries in Norway -- in Europe was worse, you know.

Q: Am -- am I correct that one of your last sabotage operations was March 1945, you call it the Operation Cement Mixer?

A: Yes, because the Germans really had a counterattack in the Ardennes [indecipherable] that often [indecipherable] it was called on, it was really tough, because it cost the allied -- I think one place you lost 75,000 Americans in that [indecipherable]. And lots of people, and then this

will be reinforced by troops. We had -- Hitler had fresh troops in Norway. And he -- they had some of the troops that had left Finland -- you know, Finland turned around and kicked the German out, you know. They came over to Norway, all of them, so it was some of the best armies in Germany, still, and now they shipped them down to Oslo, and shipped them over to -- soon as possible to Germany, to reinforce this offensive -- the [indecipherable] that offensive. But then the order came out that try to ruin -- stop the railways, north - south going railways, try to sabotage it, try to derail trains and all that. And then the [indecipherable] all the repair thing was done by -- by as -- the central office in Oslo. To repair the railroads, there were all the people there, so then I was asked to blow up the whole administration building. So it would ruin their effort to repair and build it up again. And that was done, blown up, completely destroyed, all of it. And then the [indecipherable] the gar -- it was guarded usually very well, it was about six, 10 guards there. One man was sitting behind a glass door, but we got -- we got hold of him, and -- but he s -- started shouting, as I told you before, so I -- so we had to -- I was going to take him out -- outwards, but he shouted, tried to -- to warn the rest of the guard, but he -- then you had to -- of course, to shoot him, and the guards, you couldn't think of those guards. They had th -- but they were our enemies, all of them. We hadn't invited them to Norway. So they say that we stopped about -- it was four divisions trying to be sent to Germany, and I think, I'm not sure historically that we stopped about two and a half division coming to reinforcement in Germany.

Q: And around the country they were blowing up railroad tracks and offices --

A: All the way.

Q: All over?

A: Yeah, all over, especially a train where railways were, so they derailed and all that.

Q: And I guess timing here was very --

A: Yeah, it's true --

Q: -- significant, because whe -- of where the w -- the allies were coming, so they can more quickly stop --

A: Yeah, and --

Q: -- and there was no chance to rebuild.

A: And of course, the Germans, they came as a shock to the Germans because it was all done eight o'clock in the evening, 14th March '45. And by the way, on my father's birthday. So I -- it was a good gift, when he was in prison, it was a good gift to give.

Q: And did he find out about it while he was in prison?

A: No --

Q: No.

A: -- I -- I doubt it, at that time. He may have, a little later. Rumors were going all the time.

Q: Right.

A: So --

Q: The war ends May eighth, but on March sixth, the Oslo detachment or gang, and Milorg, go and get the archives, yes? Two days before the end.

A: Yes, and then I was again, because a -- it -- German Gestapo and a Norwegian Nazis, that are burning all archives, started wi -- two, three days before the -- Norway was taken over, and then -- then we got the -- the order -- it was a order, we were under orders from the -- I got the order to try to -- try to st -- not to stop it, but to get hold of the archives, before they burnt them. We were lucky, we went to the police department, and to the justice department. And we had some secret agents there. They picked up the most important and we took it all out on a big truck, four days before the -- Eisenhower said it's over. So it -- it meant quite a lot when we -- we had the

names, all the Gestapos, we had the names of the -- many of the traitors, otherwise, they had been burned. So they are still the archives.

Q: Are they in the resistance museum, or are they --

A: No, they are taken over by the National Archives. We have some very specially deep in the -- in the cellars.

Q: Now, on May eighth, y-you are made a captain.

A: Yes.

Q: Of what? In the army, or --

A: Yes, yes --

Q: Yes?

A: -- because our outfit, the Linge company, the special -- as I said, the -- the independent company, number one, and then the -- I talked to my friend in the -- that was head of the -- all the Milorg groups all over the country, 40,000. And I said to him, “What shall I -- what am I now?” You know, in England, they had the record, they didn’t know of Sonsteby. They didn’t know any Sonsteby had been in the company. They couldn’t do anything to him, they couldn’t give him a rank, you cannot give a false name the rank. So Erling Fjeld didn’t get the rank. So --

Q: Sorensen didn’t get a rank.

A: No, sor --

Q: Nordstrom didn’t get --

A: That’s right. So then the -- Haugland said okay [indecipherable] my friend, the leader. Said, well I think you’re -- you’re a captain. And then the -- afterwards the military off -- authorities, they had to find out what -- this Sonsteby has never been here in England, never been in this company. So -- but, of course that was -- the result was that I was given that rank, but it had to

come six months later, because they had to find my name, they had to do it all properly. So I kept the title.

Q: So tell me, there are 40,000 men in Milorg?

A: Yes.

Q: And so --

A: Not -- not in uniforms --

Q: Right.

A: -- but they had all on [indecipherable] and when the Germans should give up, even in Norway, they said, we cannot surrender here, we cannot surrender our weapons. It's no allied [indecipherable] here, not one. Then they got the message from Eisenhower personally, directly. You can rest assured, you will meet 40,000 young men, they have no uniforms, but they have an [indecipherable]. And then the German general said, what's -- why [indecipherable] like this, we cannot give away our weapons to this. Then Eisenhower sent a new message. They are all disciplined, I can guarantee it, they have all weapons, they are very disciplined. And then general, in the -- at the Lillehammer in Norway said okay, we -- then 300,000 Germans surrendered to 40,000 [indecipherable] all their weapons, artillery, everything. So they had their -- it was necessary. They were -- as we say in Norway, they were en -- on ort en stellar, as they say in German, they were in the right place at the right time.

Q: And what about the other resistance groups, the Communists?

A: Well, of course --

Q: Or the --

A: -- some of them went to the Milorg.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So -- so they had some sort, but it was very few, so they did -- I must say they did a very good job at trying to hurt the armies when they were there. And -- but it was at this time, the whole leadership in the home front, I said, after four days, when the government delegation is here, you take over. We withdraw. And they all withdrew. No trouble whatsoever in Norway, the government came and took over all the --

Q: And took over?

A: Yeah.

Q: Interesting.

A: They had never any trouble, no -- never any groups that didn't follow orders.

Q: Now, you guarded the crown prince when he came back on May -- in May -- June -- no, it's May.

A: Yeah, in -- in June, yeah, that's correct.

Q: Both -- both the crown prince, and the king when he came back later?

A: Yeah, it's a -- first the crown prince came back in 13 May in '45, because he came back with the government delegation.

Q: Right.

A: Half the government, because that had to take over as soon as possible, we wanted that. And then they -- it was 10,000 Germans in Oslo, and the crown prince come -- came in there, and I was asked to -- was responsible for his life. So then I put the whole group, this detachment, or gang, they were his bodyguard, all of us.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We were about 20 of bodyguard, all the way -- when the royal family came back, they had the same. So we were about 20 people having that job.

Q: And you were in the car, I believe, am I right?

A: Yes, first of all, when the Crown Prince came, we had another friend called Max Manus, which I thought was a little quicker than me, because I could be maybe -- he -- he was like a -- like a good horse, he was -- so I thought that -- we were so afraid there were hand grenade landing in the car, because the Germans were all around, so --

Q: And the crown prince wanted to come back in an open car, right, he didn't want to have the closed car.

A: Yes, yeah, and I had the discussion with him, but he -- just did -- didn't -- only wanted an open car, but he sat on the top there, on the -- so he just didn't care, but the fellow I had -- th-the chauffeur and Max Manus [indecipherable] they were both there, and the boys around him, so we knew we could stop it, hope so.

Q: I understand that when Quisling, who was prime minister, yes? Or a minister under Terboven?

A: Yeah. An-anyway, called himself prime minister.

Q: Yeah. But he didn't have very much power.

A: No, it was nothing.

Q: It wasn't a --

A: And the Germans, they -- some -- when -- I think some of them laughed.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And -- but when you knew Hitler, you had to be careful to laugh about somebody. So they were very -- for instance, Terboven, that [indecipherable] he was very careful, because that's -- Hitler like him. That had been the whole thing. If Hitler liked him, Terboven would be kicked out instead.

Q: Right, right.

A: So it was very important to be friend of Hitler, I think, at that time.

Q: I understand that you took him -- accompanied him to his trial, right?

A: Yes, when he was t-tried, he was sitting in one prison, and it was a little too far to the place where we should -- he should be tried, courthouse. So I fetched him. And in a way I -- he was alone. I-I thought, how terrible, poor man. In a way. But of course, we knew what he had done and all that, he had been terrible, all the things. So I had a Black Maria you called that, and I put him in there, and -- and then I said to a friend of mine who had been in all the prison camps, three of the worst, and he had survived, and I said to him, Mr. [indecipherable] you sit in with Quisling. Tell him what you have experienced. But he said afterwards, wasn't very -- very many words talked between us, he said. So I thought it was a very good thing that now he was there.

Q: Interesting, yeah.

A: But it -- one thing, I have never seen any soldier, Norwegian resistance spitting or even show anything in front of the Germans, never. So, and of course Quisling was a little different, but nobody came near to him, of course. They couldn't --

Q: So there were no revenge attacks?

A: No, no, not at all. Of course, we were afraid. Some people are -- can be crazy, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: But it was nothing, and we kept an eye all the time, so he should have a trial, a fair tria -- well, as fair as possible, which we think we gave him. They -- he had his lawyers. But you know, when a man is trying to overthrow your government, if you got in a situation like here, that you had a man trying to overthrow the government here. You had to shoot him, you had to get rid of

him. And death penalty is the only thing. When a man is taking a whole country, being a traitor with the whole country, then, at that time at least, it was no discussion at all.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Pretty much.

Q: So he was sentenced to death?

A: He was shot 24th of October '45, after three, four months of trial.

Q: Did he say anything that was signif --

A: Oh yes, he tried all the time, he didn't understand.

Q: He didn't understand.

A: He pretended maybe. He pretended, I guess. H-He must have understood, but he was a strange fellow.

Q: And you met Gestapo -- the head of Gestapo, February.

A: Yes.

Q: And did you want to meet with him?

A: Well, actually, not so much, but when I saw he was there, I just said hello to him. But I had no -- nothing to tell him.

Q: Does he --

A: I -- I've nothing to speak with -- I couldn't -- what shall I talk to him about? So -- so just a few words, said to my o-old opponent. But he had been -- he -- he really organized the torture in Oslo from the very beginning. And I knew he had, for instance, tortured women. He did it in a way that put them in a cold room, and then they were naked, and they were put in cold water, and they were just -- tried to put them under water, almost til they died more or less, that was the terror, real. So he had been a terrible fellow. All the people that I'd been torturing, the -- all the

torturists, were shot in Norway. There was about -- people that -- they enjoyed it. These people had the death penalty. But when be -- when the war was over, I turned around with the Germans, the war was over, no more war. So I went to Germany already 1950, started discussing paper buyings from our paper mill in Norway. So we had forgotten -- we had not forgotten, but we knew we had to change, and saw -- I saw Germany built up as a democracy again, through those years. I was in Germany from 1950 to 1970, one, at least a month. Every month I was there. I saw the whole democracy being built up, and I knew Willie Brandt, the chancellor, later. And I think, luckily, it was -- succeeded, in my opinion, hundred percent.

Q: H-How do you explain your ability to -- the war is over, it's over, and now we start anew. Is this --

A: Well, it's natural, isn't it?

Q: I don't know. A lot of people don't do that.

A: Yes. Well, it's rational, let's put it that way. You had to be rational, you have to be [indecipherable] no way -- no way. And they were enemies, and no more because they done their best to become -- but we have people in Norway, they try -- why don't you take it into the [indecipherable] can say that? And then we said, okay, if you realize that you've done a mistake, that you did a mistake when you joined the -- the Nazi ideas, or the Nazis, Holocaust and all that. If you don't say that, that you -- you -- you were wrong, we still -- you are still my enemy. I'll never understand that. You have to regret it. When the -- you regret it, and you have your punishment, okay. But we have some people, they will never regret it, they still think they were right. And that's incredible, isn't it? That's what's strange, in my opinion. They have a few in Norway also, but we were very few in -- I think all in Europe, I think. Very few.

Q: When did you find out about the gas chambers and the genocide, and the mass killings?

A: Well, immediately, when -- it was like [indecipherable] the troops, right? It was really, really real, you know. American troops, they just didn't believe it. Russian troops, French. And so the real thing we -- we had, of course, in the last part it was a -- when -- what -- it took a long time til we heard that -- what happened to the Norwegian Jews. [indecipherable] not before the war was over, really, that you had the -- the truth of it.

Q: So did that make you more angry, that -- that make you hate? It's -- I have a sense that you don't hate.

A: No, it -- no way. [indecipherable] help at all, and I talked to my friend, very close friend that's here with me, Jule Benkel, he was -- was -- as I said, in the resistance and later on he became a -- th-the leader -- the speaker of the house, and we talk about it. I -- I feel that he is -- he lost all his family. It's hard for him -- it's hard for me to go to the Holocaust. But I --

Q: To the Holocaust Museum, yeah.

A: Yeah, here, and then everywhere. In Germany. And then my wife has taken young people down to Auschwitz, I think it's many thousand schoolchildren, she has been with one of the groups, and she said, they have changed when I have been there. They changed. It's really hard. So when I first came into a remarkable [indecipherable] here, I -- I had to -- I couldn't take it, I had to stop. I'd been through it halfway, I say, well I'm sorry, but I don't feel that. The same with [indecipherable]. And we have been [indecipherable] Norwegian authorities, our foreign ministry, I think it's a good idea that we go out and inform people. Inform them in Norway, inform them everywhere where we have listeners. Yep.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much. Is there -- is there anything more you would like to add?

A: No, I don't think so, what -- I think you have covered a little of the sto -- of the story [indecipherable] a little bit.

Q: Well, thank you so much for coming today and sharing your story with us.

A: Well, it's very nice to listen to me. I like that.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: Now can you tell us what we're looking at here? What does this represent? What does -- what does this --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- what does this represent, all of these?

A: Yeah, you see up on the left corner, that's some of my different names, aliases which I had during the war. This is part of it. I think I had about 25 dif -- different. And this, in the middle there, that's my real passport under Gunnar Sonsteby, which of course couldn't be used after '42, when I was wanted. That's the one, yeah.

Q: That's the one -- yes, that's his real one.

A: Yeah. And these others are at different times, from 1941 til '44 - '45.

Q: And they're actually different photographs --

A: Yes, I -- I -- and I just --

Q: -- I mean different si -- angles, right?

A: It's a very strange, but every picture was -- I didn't try it, but I went to these small boxes, you know, you find in the railroad station, where you look at -- as a criminal anyway, when you are photographed. So that was the case. And you see in the sign there, that's the police sign, which you had on the back o -- of the jacket. I think they did that to police here, they back -- they had in Norway at that time. So I had -- it had a number, a nu -- number, if you go down there, you see the police. I had also a secret police membership. The card shows that. So --

Q: That's the card on the --

A: Yeah, that's --

Q: -- that's being shown.

A: -- now I am a member of the secret federal police, and -- the Norwegian one. There were -- I was a spy, so I could use that in case I was in trouble. Very few times we -- I -- it usually could be used and help me. This is an ordinary police -- and this -- this is bri -- driver's license, the fuehrer court, fuehrer court. That's the driver's license, I had the made up driver's license like the name I had, so I also changed the driver's license, all of them, and then it's maybe a little one of the -- the last I had, I had it renewed in 1945, so I never -- I shouldn't tell that to the police because I never had an exam. And here, you see, that's the one there, if you go back a little, that's Erling Fjeld as a soldier in Great Britain. So it shows, you could give him any rank, Erling Fjeld, he was a -- he was a fake name, so -- but it's incredible, it's all original soldiers [indecipherable] for duration of war.

Q: Now that was when you went to Britain in 1943?

A: Yeah, and then a [indecipherable] yes, where they advised me, the British security police, to use a false name because of the spy risks in -- because I should go back into Norway. If you go a little on the side there, that green card there, then I was -- that card has been through about 50 Gestapo controls between Oslo and the border, and I had no difficulties. It's very -- I look innocent, and the passport was ideal. You had to have that kind of passport when you came up to the border. The border district had special passports with -- which I had.

Q: Now, there you're wearing a beret for the first time.

A: No, it's --

Q: No?

A: -- it's actually a cap.

Q: Oh.

A: It looks like a beret, but it's a cap.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: But the -- because of the pictures. And that's an ordinary passport which I got in Stockholm.

Q: The red one?

A: Yeah, that's a -- a real one under a false name. That was made up by Norwegian authorities in Stockholm, and it was used only when I was going to England. And it had -- this has all stamps from British authorities.

Q: And that's -- that's not a forged one, that's for real.

A: That's real one, made by Norwegian authorities outside Norway, of course, not the inside Norway. I could do because I had the garment and everything else [indecipherable] Norway, here in the war. Here you see some of the stamps which I had -- was made for me. And I used them, and I had stamps, I have a -- about 50 of them [indecipherable] papers, because when you had a car, you had to have a license plates, they were false, you had to have a control sign on your pay -- on your window, or it said that you -- you could run a car, you could run through the night. You had all -- I had all kinds of -- when I came into, four o'clock in the morning, I had a sign showing from the Gestapo cho -- top chief that I could do it. So everything was -- and I also had to make up a book. So when you were out, I had to say -- I had to know what kind of job have you had tonight with the control. And I -- I -- I did all that. It was -- could be with a car, and all that, could be three, four, five [indecipherable] you need -- they were all there. It was a -- in my opinion, it should have been a little strange that you had a routine, you were -- and there were to -- you were too good. [tape break] -- they put in the --

Q: Wait -- you want to repeat --

A: -- the hands from the back.

Q: Why don't you repeat that about the -- the --

A: Handcuffs --

Q: -- the handcuffs were used by you in the resistance.

A: Oh yes, those handcuffs there was used, and I handcuffed the hands on the back when I trol -- tried to control the guards. So -- but you had to be very quick to put the handcuffs on a man [indecipherable] bigger than you, and you had to be very quick.

Q: And those big keys?

A: Yeah, that's the -- for that [indecipherable] prison, those keys there, it was for the cells. I could have got right in there when we tried to get out my friend, who was later shot and who we tried to give that poison pill. It must be very hard for him, instead of we taking out, he just got a pill. Please take it [indecipherable]. It was terrible to -- for us, too, to do that. But he was terribly tortured. Could have helped him.

Q: And those brass knuckles, whose are those?

A: Yeah, that -- is that a [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, that could be used if you are a --

Q: Did you use those? Did you have those?

A: No, I ha -- I didn't, but I knew exactly, I was trained how to use it. If you hit a man just behind the ears you can kill him always. They are terribly -- they are very -- and if you hit the man on the nose like that, he wouldn't talk to you for some hours, I can tell you. So it's a very dangerous thing. For German and Norwegian, I'll tell you that.

Q: Okay, go ahead.

A: Yeah, this is a passport which we used when you are nearing the border. When we were about 25 from the border, 25 miles, then you would have a special passport. Every citizen there would

have this kind, so you can -- you are allowed to be in that district so near the border. And it was necessary to have this. If you haven't got them, you would be arrested when you -- it was a restricted area alongside a border. And that's a picture that I usually -- when you take a picture in that box in the station all that, they're all different. Look like criminal anyway, don't you, when you have these pictures taken.

Q: It's a nice picture.

A: And it's in German and Norwegian. So you can see the German, now you would read the German, so the -- the German guard would see immediately that you were supposed to be there. And you -- you would be arrested co -- if you hadn't a good reason to be visiting there, and even if you should go 30 miles in Norway, you had to have a permission. The written permission. And here is that passport of Thor Hansen. Then -- this I very seldom used, because you see in the signature th-that is from the general -- Nazi general Martinsen who was the most -- that's my handwriting, but on the we -- left side, you see it's signed by Martinsen, he was one of the worst men we had in Norway. He was a leader of the -- all these state police, all the federal Nazi police, and I used to -- I know his handwriting so well now, so I can -- if you want me to sign it, I may be able to sign it even today.

Q: So when would you use that?

A: I would use it in -- for instance when I had to go to a special district in Norway with a -- to try -- if it was a real hurry, to get to tol -- tell people, give them some idea, then I could use this. And in the car, I had a car, it was the same state police car, federal -- could be a Chevrolet, could be a Chrysler that I -- that I had, and that -- I had a driver's license with the same name, Thor Hansen, and that -- on the -- I -- plate there, it said -- the state police, federal police. So it could be three, four documents which you had to have in order to go through that control, Gestapo control.

Q: And you didn't have to wear a uniform in that situation?

A: No, no, it's all civilian.

Q: [indecipherable] uh-huh.

A: We're all civilians. All Gestapo, they were ordinary civilians. Very seldom they show that they were all S -- SS, they had high ranks, but they were -- to do that job, they had to be all, as in Germany, they were all civilian clothes. So I had -- I didn't need the -- and that's an ordinary passport, which every Norwegian had to have, with the number and everything. Luckily, if you see the number on top there, if they had stopped me, and had the lightest suspicion that I was lying, then they would call that number, that was that.

Q: Mm.

A: And I was finished. So -- but I never -- they never did, luckily. But if they did so, you would be taken immediately. Then you are -- then you would be killed.

Q: But this is when you were Erling?

A: Yes.

Q: Af --

A: Yeah, that's Erling Jacobsen, is it?

Q: No.

A: Erling -- oh this is Brul, that's my -- bull. Chicago Bulls.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: No, this is Erling -- Erling Johannes Brul --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- you see, on the top there.

Q: I see, so it's another --

A: That's the family name on the top.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And down to 16 years you had to have these passports, everybody.

Q: Okay.

A: When you had that passport and you -- no, when you had that passport, on the left side you had a J printed when you were a Jew. And that came in, I think it was in '41 - '42, it was terrible, of course, when we saw that in Norway. We had never thought of it, that he was -- was he -- that [indecipherable] was he we didn't ever think about it, so we thought it was awful, all Norway.

Q: I have a question to ask you. Do you dream about this now?

A: Not at all. When I leave here, I put the drawer inside again. Now, I have taken the drawer out, when I leave this room, I put it in again.

Q: Do you think about it?

A: No, not at all.

Q: Not at all?

A: No. But I have to think about it tomorrow, because then I --

Q: You have to speak, yes.

A: -- meet my friend, and we have to talk about it. Then you have to put it in again.

Q: So how -- when you --

A: No, I am lucky there. I am just [indecipherable]

Q: Well when you look --

A: -- tonight --

Q: Yes

A: [indecipherable] think about it.

Q: It'll -- it'll be gone.

A: Oh yes. Why shouldn't it?

Q: So when you think about your life --

A: It's in here -- it's in -- time now, I don't need to think that way.

Q: But when you think back --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- at that time, are you amazed at what you did, or it's just well, this is what I did? I mean --

A: No.

Q: You're not amazed?

A: No. It was so long ago, you know, so -- no, don't think about it.

Q: And do you see yourself as a hero?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Do you see yourself as a hero?

A: Not yet.

Q: Not yet.

A: No, no, not at all. Well, we were many, you know. And some of the small people here, which helped us, could be the hero, for instance, any of them, gave us the right intelligence. And if we were taken and you know, I could get away because I was quite clever, you know, and the others, they [indecipherable]. So they, the helpers were usually the heroes. That's quite clear. Oh, that's quite clear.

Q: Well, I think you're a hero. You don't have to. Thank you.

A: You have the rest of them?

End of Tape Five

Conclusion of Interview