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## **Life in Crazy Times**

An American Internee in War-torn Europe

November 08, 2018

1 hour, 37 minutes, 07 seconds

Speakers: Professor Judith Hughes and Lou de Beer

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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- Time      Transcription
- 00:00      [The Library UC San Diego]
- 00:06      [A Holocaust Living History Workshop Event]
- 00:14      [November 8, 2018 / Life in Crazy Times: An American Internee in War-torn Europe – with Lou de Beer]
- 00:02      Susanne Hillman: Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you all to our pre-event today. Our main event will be introduced by Dr. Erik Mitchell, the new University Librarian, and our main speaker, of course, is Lou de Beer. But now it is my pleasure to introduce Professor Emerita Judith Hughes, who is a prolific historian, who has written numerous books on the history of psychoanalysis, on the Maginot Line. I have it at home; I haven't read it yet, and more recently on the Holocaust. Her last book dealt with the Holocaust, history of the Holocaust, and the revival of psychoanal, psycho history right? Psychological history, okay. And as you can see, her latest book - which we are very pleased to bring to your attention - is called *Witnessing the Holocaust: Six Literary Testimonies [(Perspectives on the Holocaust)]* and Professor Hughes is now going to talk about this important book. Judy.
- 01:02      Professor Judith Hughes: I want to thank Susanne for giving me this opportunity to talk about my new book, and how did I come to write it. Well, my earlier book about the Holocaust, that is *The Holocaust and the Revival of Psychological History*, grew out of an undergraduate seminar that I'd been teaching for a number of years, and this one grew out of that same seminar but in an indirect fashion. In the fall of 2013 when the earlier book was already under review, I had the impression that the student's attitude - at least at the beginning of the quarter - could be summed up as - war, bad stuff happens - and I was appalled. What I took to be, perhaps unfairly, a trivialization of the Holocaust. Now the very enormity of the crimes committed by the Nazis, their sheer implausibility, increases the likelihood of a leveling or flattening out, and to prevent that, to preserve a sense of unease, of estrangement, of moral concern, one needs to individualize the mass death. One needs to hear the voices of those who experience history in person. Hence my attention to diaries and autobiographies. I thought this would be an antidote to this, what I thought was trivialization, but just sort of up there in the stratosphere. The the students were up there and I wanted to bring them down to earth, to try to force them to imagine to, what it was like. And what, which voices? Now there are lots I could have chose from, and I did review many and then weeded them out. The voices I have in mind are those of Victor Klemperer, Ruth Kluger, Michal Glowinski, Primo Levi, Imre Kertész, and Béla Zsolt.
- 03:16      Professor Judith Hughes: My aim was to allow these survivors to speak, to sort out what was happening, or had happened to them. I tried to be attentive to the vivid

detail of everyday life without rushing to comment or to interpret. To put it another way, I undertook to listen, keeping my presence in the narrative to a minimum. I accepted my protagonists' compelling, albeit implicit, invitation to join them in their worlds, to be sure as they represented them. I was mindful of their refusal to allow themselves to be erased, of their determination to provide a literary trail, to ensure that those persecuted would not become nameless and faceless numbers. Why these writers and not others? How to justify my choices? First, the authors I selected are prominent, some very prominent, and either in the original or in translation their works are readily available to an English-speaking audience. Second, with the exception of Klemperer, who converted to Protestantism as a young adult, they are all or were secular Jews. So Elie Wiesel is not in my cast of characters. And, aside from Levi, my protagonists were not part of an organized resistance movement. And Levi was classified by the Nazis as a Jew and suffered accordingly.

05:09 Professor Judith Hughes: At the outset, I had decided to focus on secular Jews. This was a matter of personal preference and also a matter of personal identification. As I was nearing the end of the study, I came to recognize another characteristic I share with my protagonist - an aversion to sentimentality. I have to assume that this dislike helped guide my initial choice. Now the texts run from Victor Klemperer's - this is the, the, it's, I don't know if it comes out very clearly; it's the table of contents. The text run from Klemperer's diary to Kertész's autobiographical fiction. It was chronology and geography that dictated the order of chapters, that is the chronology and geography of Nazis expansion and their pursuit of their genocidal project. Klemperer, here's a picture with him and his wife, was 52, 52 in 1933 when the Nazis came to power. He was then a, a professor of French literature at Dresden Technical University. He was an inveterate diarist, a diarist, and continued. I'll say more about that a minute, but here's a picture of him and his wife. And it's his wife that accounts for his survival. She was an Aryan and he had, as I said, had converted to Protestantism as a young adult, and only towards the end of the war was he counted among the Jewish community in Dresden. What he, what he wrote, I kept a diary. And he said that his wife saved him but the diary and keeping the diary uh, enabled him to keep his mental balance. It became increasingly dangerous to keep, to diary and he gave pages of it to a friend of his wife's who who took it away to a safe place.

07:24 Professor Judith Hughes: When the diary was published in the mid-1990s, it was not the whole diary because that was more than 5000 pages, but an abridged version in German, in the mid-[19]90s, a couple of years later in English. It was a sensation, an absolute sensation. Because here was a German patriot, he always thought of himself as a patriot. He had served on the Western Front during the First World War, and here he was saying everything that he had considered German, unGerman - excuse me unGerman - was flourishing here. But here was a a patriotic German who increasingly felt completely homeless, who increasingly sensed that

murder was nipping at his heels. As it was, he survived because of his wife. And then the Dresden bombing. He was caught. He managed to escape. They survived the Dresden bombing. He ripped off his star and they, they, they trekked all the way to Munich. Now the second person, some of you may know her, uh is Ruth Kluger. She was seven years old when the Nazis annexed Austria in March 1938. Four years later she was shipped first to Theresienstadt, then to Auschwitz, and then to a, another, went to another concentration camp. As the war was ending, she and her mother were on a march, which for many, many proved lethal. She and her mother managed to escape and headed to the West. She got to the United States in the late 1940s and then had a distinguished career as a professor of German literature, including teaching at UC [University of California] Irvine.

09:26 Professor Judith Hughes: The other person in this chapter, because the, the second chapter has two, two protagonists, was Michal Glowinski. These were both children but they haven't, they were both children during the war. He was just five, turning five, when the Nazis overran Poland in September 1939. After he and his parents escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto, the boy found shelter in a Catholic Convent now both of - and, and after the war he stayed in Poland after the War. He's had a distinguished career as a literary critic. Both Kluger and Glowinski wrote memoirs that were published in the 1990s, then she re-did hers. It's not just a translation, revised it, uh, and it was published in English as *Still Alive* in 2001. His was published in Polish in the, in 1998, and came out in an English translation under the title *Black Seasons* in [20]05. When their works were published, they received acclaim, both of them were highly, highly praised. Not so the work of my next protagonist whom you may recognize. He is undoubtedly the most prominent of my cast of characters, and that's Primo Levi. It was not until September of 1930, excuse me September 1943, that the Germans overran Italy, the attack, the Germans over - yes. The Italians were trying to get out of the war. They had reached an armistice with the Western Allies and were trying to get into the war as with, along with the Allies. And Hitler's response to that was to invade Northern and Central Italy.

11:27 Professor Judith Hughes: Levi at that point uh, was 24 years old. He had been trained, somewhat surreptitiously, as a chemist and was working as such in Milan. When the Germans invaded, he took to the hills of his native Piedmont and joined a partisan unit. I think it was a rather ramshackle affair. It was quickly betrayed and he was arrested and sent to Monowitz/Buna, a satellite camp of Auschwitz. He was there in January of 1945 when the Russians liberated the camp and it took him nine months, a very extensive odyssey, to get back to his native Turin. When he did, he was determined to write about his experiences, and he did. He published his book if this were, *If This Is a Man* in 1947, and it was, and it was [unclear]. It didn't get any attention at all and it wasn't until the 1960s that it began to get some international acclaim. It was published in an English translation with the, initially with the unfortunate title of *Survival in Auschwitz*, and it's now come out again *If This is a Man*. And um, in it uh, and he, and now it is a classic. I mean. I think uh, students

read it. I used to assign it in an undergraduate history course, a lower division course, and I think this is, as I said, the best-known of my characters.

- 13:17 Professor Judith Hughes: The Hungarian Jews were the last to fall prey to the Nazis, not until the spring/summer 1944. And again, it was a Hungarians were trying, were putting out feelers to the Western powers to try to get out of their alliance with Hitler, and he responded by invading Hungary. He sent into Hungary Adolf Eichmann to round up, to oversee the rounding up of Hungarian Jews, and in the space of something like six to eight weeks 437 Jews were rounded up by the Nazis. But with the assistance, the very great assistance - 437,000 right - and with the assistance of the Hungarians, were sent to Auschwitz, and four-fifths of them were murdered right away. Imre Kertész was one of those rounded up. He was 14 years old when the Hungarians, when the Nazis came. He ended up, he went, was sent from Auschwitz quickly he was selected. He lied about his age was sent to Buchenwald, to another camp, back to Buchenwald, and managed to come back to Budapest at the end of the war. He wrote about his experiences and published them in 1975 in Hungarian. The book attracted little attention in Hungary, little attention outside Hungary until in [20]02, 2002, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, principally for this book which had now come out in a second English translation, with the title *Fatelessness* and in it he talked about his experiences.
- 15:16 Professor Judith Hughes: The final, my final protagonist is a man less well known, uh, Béla Zsolt. He was already well-established. He was 49 when the Germans came in. He was a well-known literary figure in Budapest in the interwar years and um, somewhat on the left, somewhat and, not that, not an extreme left, but somewhat on the left and he wrote about his experiences after the War. It was published in serial form in Budapest in [19]47, [19]48, didn't attract much attention, and finally, and he died about a year later. It was published in English with the title *Nine Suitcases* in [20]02 and it is a fascinating account of the most bizarre kind of escape that you could possibly imagine. Well taken together, taken together these texts achieve my purpose which is to convey a broad range of horrors. Now one is predisposed to praise books by Holocaust survivors. Indeed, no record of that most terrible experience is without value. Yet the fact is that the quality of the writing matters, and to have witnesses and survivors who are also superb writers that, I think, is the rare combination that sets my protagonists apart. So I've made extensive use of quotation. The reader needs to hear a good deal from the authors selected for the distinct flavor of their prose to emerge with force.
- 17:14 Professor Judith Hughes: Well what general themes can also become apparent? Well obviously to bear witness, to preserve the memory of the horror, to resist its extinction - that's the overarching theme. Because the stories of the dead are lost, Primo Levi wrote, the survivors must speak by, in their place by proxy. Now what other themes emerged along the way? Time, time helps. So Kertész, when he came back to Budapest, he encountered a journalist who was very inquisitive - he was still

wearing his striped jacket - and was very inquisitive, wanted to know what his experience had been like, how he had managed to survive and the Gyuri, the boy, elaborated. Were it not for the sequencing in time and with the entire knowledge to crash in upon a person on the spot at one fell swoop it might well be that neither one's brain, nor one's heart could cope with it. Klemperer, for his part, might have fought, he did fight, a rear guard action against recognizing the trajectory of Nazi antisemitism. Still, he was not forced to face it, out and, face that reality at one fell swoop. For Levi enlightenment came with the greatest suddenness. The muselmanner - that is those prisoners who were on their last legs, about to, about to die - he noted, they're beaten by time. They do not begin to learn German, and to untangle the fiendish knot of laws and prohibitions, until their body is already breaking down and nothing can save them from selection, or from death by exhaustion.

19:18 Professor Judith Hughes: It was Kertész, not Levi who, it was Kertész who became, who came closest to being crushed, who really at, was at one point was given up for dead. He, he found later in the Buchenwald records that he was listed as dead, and had been uh, and, and had near, had really uh, was on the verge of extinction. So time is the first, is another theme. Resourcefulness, albeit intermittent at best. Glowinski described his younger self as so deadened, so passive and unreflective, that he failed to respond to the news that his mother had made her way to the convent sheltering him. Kluger wrote of her decision to escape the forced march at War's end, we tend to slither, she said, into life-changing circumstances, situations, driven by this or that circumstance. But anyone who has ever made a real decision knows the difference between pushing ahead and being pushed. Our decision was a, a real free decision. Levi struck a similar note in talking to Philip Roth. Philip Roth was interviewed him about the last ten days. The last chapter of, of *If This is a Man*, *If This Were a Man* um, is a detailed account of that last ten days. He was in the sick bay, in an infectious ward, with ten other people in the room, and the camp had been evacuated. The SS [Schutzstaffel] had left the camp, assuming that those who were too sick to be on the last march would all die. They would just be left there to die, and Levi was in a ward. There were two French prisoners, who were recent prisoners, and they were in much better shape. And they, he set about finding heat, light, food, for the people in the ward.

21:31 Professor Judith Hughes: And talking to Philip Roth he said, I did feel like Robinson Crusoe, but with one important difference: Crusoe set to work for his individual survival, whereas I and my two French companions were consciously willing to work to save the lives of our sick comrades. The other another theme I think may be the most important, aside from bearing witness, was luck. In that same interview, Roth maintained that thinking contributed to Levi's survival. That his survival was rooted in his quote, professional character. He was a chemist, the man of precision, the control over experiments, who seeks the principle of order, confronted with the evil inversion of everything he values. That's what la, that's what Roth said; Levi

disagreed. He demurred politely but firmly. As for survival, I insist there was no general rule except entering the camp in good health and knowing German. Barring this, luck dominated. I have seen the survival of shrewd people and silly people, the brave and the cowardly, thinkers and madmen. In my case, luck played an essential role on at least two occasions. In leading me to meet the Italian bricklayer - he's working on a building site and he encountered Lorenzo, a forced laborer. He was not a Jew. He was not, he was in a different part of the camp. He was, and from that moment - on for six months - Lorenzo brought him a pail of soup every day. And the second piece of luck, Levi said, was falling sick once, but at the right time. His, his closest friend Alberto had been healthy enough to be on that forced march out of Auschwitz, and he had died on the march. So this is what Levi said these two pieces of luck.

- 23:40 Professor Judith Hughes: Now all the authors considered in this study would have agreed that there was no algorithm for survival, there was no recipe. Further, there was no particular virtue in having survived, and no particularly demerit in having succumbed. There's no place for sentimentality here. There are no grounds for feel-good myth-making. Now what's going to happen to these stories? My generation is elderly now, and for people my age, who were children in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, knowledge of the Holocaust helped shaped our political consciousness and orientation to the world. Not so my grandchildren's generation. Will they, I'll just end with this question, will they take the trouble to retrieve the past, to recover it in its specificity and concreteness? Thank you. Shall I take this out?
- 24:51 Susanne Hillman: Hold on. Thank you very much Judy and Professor Hughes brought uh, flyers um, that allow you to purchase her book with a 30 percent discount or something. You definitely sparked our interest. Uh, so thank you very much. Um, we take a five-minute break, so please help yourself to some refreshments and then the main event will begin.
- 25:15 Erik Mitchell: So thank you so much for being with us tonight uh, for our talk by Lou de Beer. We're very honored to have him with us. My name is Erik Mitchell. I'm the Audrey Geisel University Librarian and I have the honor of welcoming Lou. I am so glad you're here with us, with us for the second workshop of the 2018 uh, fall season. Our next one is January 17, 2019, "How Historians Interpret Gender in the Holocaust" with Marion Kaplan. And I certainly encourage you to come to all of our uh, HLHW [Holocaust Living History Workshop] events uh, and we wanted to call out our marquee event on April 10th, Dirk Moses, the Professor of Modern History at the University of Sydney. I'd also remind you that we still have Barbara Michelman's exhibit on display - out the hallway and down. It's on display until December 13th, and so certainly I encourage you to look at that tonight. And if you weren't with us for our first event, Barbara Michelman gave a wonderful talk about the photographic work that she has done. Of course, I need to extend special thanks to my co-director, Deborah Hertz, for the Holocaust Living History Workshop,

and a thank you to Susanne for all the planning, and all of the everyone who has contributed to bring tonight's event together.

26:36 Erik Mitchell: I wanted to start tonight by recognizing the lives of the eleven Jews who were lost in the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Philadelphia and - excuse me Pittsburgh - and the frightening historical memory uh, that tragedy evokes. I know we all understand the need to tell the Holocaust story and to remember. And in the words of Magda Brown uh, Holocaust survivor and frequent speaker, now the world needs to hear this message more than ever. I know personally I've appreciated being a part of the Holocaust Living History Workshop during my short time at San Diego and for me, this event underscored the need for each of us or the value in each of us - excuse me the importance - to educate our community through historical memories. Tonight we are especially fortunate to be joined by Lou de Beer, who is not only a witness and survivor of the Holocaust but one of San Diego's hometown heroes who resides in Coronado. From what I understand, Lou has a extraordinary and fascinating story. I think you'll learn tonight that he uh, his story is one of a personal account of the occupation of Amsterdam, where he was born, and the experience he had uh, in the years during the war. And I think I, as as well as you, will be it was struck by the bravery and resilience of this story. So please join me in welcoming Lou.

28:09 Lou de Beer: Good evening everyone and tonight I'm going to be presenting to you my personal, and my family's, experiences during the Second World War - as the title indicates up there. I was born in Amsterdam in 1931, on Saint Nicholas Day, December 6th, to an American family. My parents had come to the United States in the early [19]20s, became naturalized American citizens. I have an older brother who was born in Kentucky as a consequence of them being in the United States. And then they came back to the Netherlands, and I was born, became a citizen automatically at that time because of American immigration law. And I had a younger brother who was born there too, about a year and a half, two years younger. The image you see up there is a familiar one, the people who have been to Amsterdam, of course. It's known as the Venice of the north, canals, etc. Uh, this uh, photograph over here was the street I was born on a, near a famous park Eastern Park or Oosterpark. The street still exists but the houses don't. They've all been torn down since the war. Over here is my elementary school. The street still exists and some of the buildings still stand. This is a picture of the Netherlands, a country of 12 provinces. Amsterdam is located about this area over here.

29:53 Lou de Beer: A little bit about the conditions prior to and during the war. Prior to the war um, the Netherlands - although a country of great tolerance - had been, had been also affected by the rise of fascism, as it was in the neighboring countries. Of course in Spain you had [Francisco] Franco, [António de Oliveira] Salazar in Portugal, The Union of Fascists in Great Britain, [Adolf] Hitler, of course, in 1933 when he came to power. In Norway, you had the Quisling, Vidkun Quisling, and in



the Netherlands um, we had the NSB, the National Socialist Movement. NSB is the uh, the abbreviation for the movement. The leader of that party - if I can find my uh - is Anton Mussert, or was Anton Mussert, a civil engineer who headed up the party. And what we saw prior to the war is a great enthusiasm among a small group of people for this particular brand of uh, governess. The Dutch people were not particularly interested, but they were a well-organized but small group. At the time, about 10,000 members. Over here, I've seen them parade through Amsterdam quite often singing, and here is a typical march of the youth. All these fascist movements, very heavy emphasis on the indoctrination of the youth. Let's see if I can get this started. [film reel of youth marching]

31:38 Lou de Beer: Often my brother and I would stand uh, in the crowd. This happens to be a - I lost, oh there it is - um, this is a town a little bit in northern uh just north of Amsterdam, Alkmaar. It was a youth uh, gathering uh; you can see it here. You can hear the young voices. The emphasis was on discipline. It followed the general rule of a, of typical fascist movements. The leader who was, he was the man that could do no wrong so to speak. Uh, here's another one. [Velddag der Nationale Jeugd Storm te Amsterdam 1938] My father and I attended some of these sessions, these gatherings because my father was interested in listening what they had to say, and I went along with him. In this particular one, again a youth organization, in their march. [Aan een der boorden van het "IJ" wordt opgesteld.] This is in Amsterdam. [film reel of youth marching] We used to, as kids, we ran after the marchers, you know, like kids do. I had no idea what was going on. I was too young. I was eight, nine years old.

34:07 Lou de Beer: And now, if I can find the uh, yeah here it is. The time is 15 May 1940. Five days prior to that the Germans attacked the Netherlands without a declaration of war. The Dutch Army had to surrender in five days because they couldn't withstand the might of the Germans. They had already bombed Rotterdam. What you're seeing now is what I witnessed, and I'll show you the place where we, my brothers and I, witnessed. This is the entry of the German troops into Amsterdam on 15 May. A lot of people looking as a German officer talking to a Dutch policeman. The reason they went through Amsterdam, they didn't have to but they wanted to make sure people understood that, who were to be the new masters in the country. Here's an officer's, he's a general officer, the fellow is walking away. It's probably members of his staff. Okay, what you see over here, this building right here, is the Royal Palace. My brothers and I stood right here, where I'm pointing my, my mouse. And you see some of the people who were members of the Fascist Party were handing out what looked like some candies to the German troops. These, this procession went on for a couple of days, and here are some more stills over here. Over here again, this is Amsterdam loaded, trucks loaded with troops.

36:02 Lou de Beer: There are some people greeting the uh, the conquerors, and my, my younger brother is kind of small, a feisty little guy anyway, and he liked to run across

the streets all the time, between the trucks, etc. A couple of times he got caught by a couple of the German guards, but they didn't, you know, he's just a kid. But he, he kind of fought on my, one time I got into a fight with him, or it looked like he was kicking the guard, and he let him go and he ran back across the street. Uh, here you see some pictures of, a little closer up, these are motorized, SS motorized units. More entry of armored vehicles and trucks. This is a typical picture, German soldiers probably on leave. And we used to talk to them. They didn't understand us and I didn't understand them but, and they'd show us, sometimes show their pictures of their families. They'd always point to the point to the film, to the photo, and say, Kinder, Kinder - meaning children children - obviously implying that they had children. This photograph over here is a motorcycle. You'll notice the two breastplates. These are military police, German military police. And my younger brother and I were walking down the street one day and we heard halt, stop. So we turned around and this motorcycle, the two people on the motorcycle, came up to us and they beckoned to us, komm, komm. So we did, and I guess - we talked about it my brother and I - and said, I guess they want us to go for a ride. So I sat in the back. This is not the actual picture; this is representative. I sat on the back of this motorcycle. My brother sat in the lap of the, of the soldier over here, and we drove all over the place. You know, we thought it was great. And then they stopped, and one of the fellows got out, and he brought us back a couple of ice creams. So went home, told my mother about it. She was furious. My mother and my father didn't say too much but uh, it was my mother who became very vocal.

38:22 Lou de Beer: Over here is another typical scene. These are not combat troops, these are police. The Grüne Polizei, as they call them. Their grüne, green police, because they wore a shade of green. This is typical of uh, they'd stopped the traffic at random searches. Now here, in these pictures, are some of the key people, and I've see, I've seen them all at one time or another - either in a parade or on the street, usually making a speech or, or in the middle of a conversation. The fellow over here, as I said is, Anton Mussert. This is the administrator of the Netherlands at that time his name is [Arthur] Seyss-Inquart, a Austrian lawyer directly responsible to Hitler. Here is a, excuse me, Rauter, Albin Rauter, who was the head of the SS security police, charged with the security of German personnel, and German installations. And over here in the middle, the man in a Dutch uniform is in a general who was responsible for uh, for the volunteer SS Legion. The Germans relied heavily upon advertising. They wanted people of Dutch descent because, to the German racial theory was, they are the closest cousins, racially, to the Germans. And that's by the way, one of the reasons they appointed a civilian administrator, to soften the blow instead of a military administrator. He was assassinated by the resistance. He opened the door one day and two men from the resistance, one of them shot him right in the face, and the other one into the stomach. He died almost instantly.

- 40:15 Lou de Beer: This fellow over here Rauter, was also attacked by a resistance group. Unfortunately, when the resistance did that, the reprisals were ferocious uh, on random arrests. And then they would take the people and, you know, liquidate them - shoot them. Uh, all these men you see here, he [Seyss-Inquart] was tried at Nuremberg and hung for crimes, war crimes, Rauter was executed by firing squad in the Netherlands. Um, Mussert was uh, arrested and uh, tried for treason. He also was executed. The only fellow not executed, this was the commander of the German military, military forces in the Netherlands. See if I can get this to work. I was present with my older brother; we saw Himmler, Heinrich Himmler the Reichsführer-SS in, he was visiting the Dutch headquarters of the Dutch Fascist Party. Of course, I did couldn't see him that close, but we were allowed to watch with a crowd of people. This is an honor guard he's uh, inspecting, SS honor guard. He's actually quite a small individual. You wouldn't think so by some of the pictures. One of the first things the Germans did when they occupied the Netherlands is uh, put out recruiting posters of a number of varieties, so to speak. Some are in Dutch. In fact, these are all in Dutch.
- 42:10 Lou de Beer: This one over here, just to give you an idea what we're after, in dienst van das volk - in the service of our people. And the question is, and you? This fellow over at this particular poster is interesting. He said it asks, who is the most valuable? Wie is de ware nederlander? The comparison between a kind of a, a feminine individual smoking a cigarette, and a soldier ready to do battle. Over here is an appeal to join the youth section of the Dutch Fascist Party. Here is a poster asking for volunteer, SS volunteers. And here strijdt mee means fight, fight with us. Um, over here you have the uh, Legion Nederland. And again over here, weest dapper, means uh, be brave, be courageous. Become a stormer. Stormer was the name they gave the young people who joined the the youth portion of the Fascist Party. Over here there's a recruiting office for the SS. We walked past here many times, looked at the windows. Just had a bunch of pamphlets and books, but people would go inside and sign up, mostly young men. Then they went to Germany for training.
- 43:38 Lou de Beer: Two things that the Germans almost instituted immediately in Amsterdam or the Netherlands, one are restrictions as to the people's movement, curfew, rationing, confiscation of radios. Here you see the establishment of a Jewish quarter. All Jews were required to wear, on the left-hand side of their clothing, a Star of David, the yellow Star of David. As you can see, Jood means a Jew. The restrictions, the restricted areas where these uh, quarters Jooden Viertel mean and Jewish wijk, means Jewish quarters. This happens to be a street called the Jodenbreestraat. Translated, it's probably closer to Jewish broad street, dates from about the early part of the 17th century when a large community of Jews fled from Spain and Portugal and lived here. This building over here, some of you may have been in, is a Rembrandthuis, famous house of uh Rembrandt van Rijn, 17<sup>th</sup>-century painter. He lived here and the house exists. I've been in the street many, many

times. Over here's Anne Frank Huis, walked past here quite often with my brothers, or just walking by this is the house famous Anne Frank Huis.

- 45:13 Lou de Beer: Last time I saw that they kind of dressed it up, and added a big restaurant kind of spoiled the environment, but this is what it looked like. I think this picture was taken just after the war perhaps, or maybe in the 19, late 1944 or so. Over here, when the sets, we had to turn our radios in. Now it's very easy because the, the, in order to have a radio in those days you had to pay a fee. It had to be registered. So the Germans, all they have to do is look at the lists that are available. You got a letter and you have to turn in your radio. If you didn't turn in the radio, which many Dutch didn't do, uh they could come and get you. They could throw you the concentration camp or, many times they, it wasn't too well enforced. So what my nephew did, he built a little crystal set. And now, this is not the one he built; he put it in a cigar box, and all he had to do was put out a piece of wire because the broadcast you wanted to listen to were the BBC [British Broadcasting Company] which had the big powerful transmitters. So you didn't need much antenna which is kind of across, the across the pond, as you can imagine, being that close to, close to England.
- 46:34 Lou de Beer: Over here is some scenes that I witnessed. I was out with my older brother one day. This is an area in the city, right in the city where the uh, still existing Portuguese synagogue is located. A synagogue that was built by Portuguese Jews in about 1650, 1670 or so, that exists. The Germans didn't bother it. They took some of the some of the uh, material out of the synagogue, but they did not destroy it. We were walking along, I think it was over here someplace, and we saw these trucks trucks pull up, and these soldiers - actually again the Grüne Polizei - jump out. And at random they were rounding up these people, and it turned out to be these were Jews arrested at random. And they'd put them in the truck, and they'd go to whatever concentration camp they were destined for. Over here's a close-up view. This building right here is an air raid shelter that we use when the Germans invaded the Netherlands. We were often ordered, during the time that there was some fighting, to go to the air raid shelters. You can tell by the German police over here. Signs for Jews forbidden, in Dutch, voor Joden verboden. They were all over the place.
- 48:01 Lou de Beer: This over here is a commemorative tablet which commemorates a very famous event uh, during these couple of days in 1941. The, a strike was called by the Communist Party. By that time, all parties of course were forbidden to exist except the Dutch Fascist Party. The Communist Party, the best-organized party both as far as clandestine operations and resistance operations, called for a major strike and it did occur. And this is a commemorative plaque. It objected to two things: one, the treatment of the Jews - about the fact that they were being rounded up and deported - and second, the Germans had instituted a program of forced labor. You got a letter in the mail; you had to report to such and such a place, and

then you were shipped to Germany because they were desperately short of people in the factories, whatever the factory happened to be. The people who didn't report, of course, they came and get them. Okay, slight interruption. [film reel of soldiers] This is in Northern Holland and we saw the fellow that I showed you before, the Administrator of the Netherlands. This was, I believe, his first inspection of Northern Holland, and what we're seeing here is an honor guard. And I'll show you the moment where myself and my older brother, if I can see it back here, we tried to stand back here where the speaker is but they wouldn't let us. Okay, what he's saying is, he says, we have acted to defend the highest and dearest, our German people and the future of our children. Comrades, therefore every German man had to become a soldier.

50:05 Lou de Beer: All right, here I'll show you in a moment where we finally were able to sneak a view of the parade. These are news, Dutch newsreel pictures. Okay, you'll see him here in his car. He's taking the salute. My, my brother and I were right behind the car. My little brother tried to sneak between the legs of these people who were standing next to the car. So we watched this parade. The Germans loved parades. Every day you saw them through, going through the city. Sometimes they would sing, but usually, they had a band with them. Now comes a fateful day in the life of our family. Remember, we're an American family in Amsterdam - three children and two adults, my mother and father at the time. Here's Hitler at the Reichstag - find it here, yeah. He uh, has a whole litany of uh, things he uh, is talking about. And one of the things he's talking about is the belligerency of the United States in a variety of ways. First of all in aiding England, when the Germans believe that we should have retained our neutrality. And so, what he does, he declares war in the United States. [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt, and this was the date 1941, December 11th, not many days after Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt, that same day within uh, I think it was about within 10 hours, he signs a proclamation declaring war on Germany. And what that did was our status as neutrals, Americans in the Netherlands, as neutral - since the United States at that time, before that, before this date - it was not at war with Germany. We became enemy aliens which led to the following problems.

52:41 Lou de Beer: First thing that happened, my brother - younger brother - and I were coming home from school. I remember this late in the after, fairly late in the afternoon, and one of the neighbors said, oh the Germans have taken your father and brother - my older brother. So, went home found my mother in tears with some of the neighbors who were trying to console her. So I asked her what happened. Can you hear me okay? And my mother said, well they took Pa, my father, and my brother Harry. And I said, well, why did they do that, and where did they go? She just said she didn't know but we're going to find out. My mother, who had been a um, a telephone operator before the war on the international exchange, had to, had learned some German. In fact, she was pretty good in Germany, German. So that was going to help because she had to add there were two people who came, she

told me - one, a uniformed policeman, and the other one was a civilian. So what happened the next morning, my brother and, my mother, and I - my younger brother went to school - we visited Dutch police station first. And they said, I'm sorry, we can't help you. You have to go to the German command, military command. We did, which was a villa right across the Museum, famous Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. They said, no we don't handle that. You have to go to the security police. So the next morning again, I went with my mother and we went to the SS and Gestapo Headquarters in Amsterdam. This is a requisition that was originally a girls' school. And I remember this very vividly, you can see the size of the flag, the SS flag. We walked in here, where there was nobody. There with no guards. We just walked in. There was a fellow sitting at the desk and my mother addressed him in German.

54:50 Lou de Beer: He said the - very polite - said, okay we'll uh, see uh, what we can do. As it turns out, she got a pass to see my father, and where she had to go was a SS prison on the coast, in a place called Scheveningen, which is a famous resort area. And he was confined there along the with resistance members and political dissidents, so to speak. Excuse me, and when she came back - she was allowed to see him once a week - she saw him for two weeks. After that, she came back one day and he was gone. Tried to find out, didn't hear a thing, didn't hear it. We never saw my brother until much later so, there was no communication. And of course uh my mother was very very upset about that. There's nothing she could do. She she did go back to the uh, to the security office over here, but they didn't give her any information. Over here is the man who ran the the security office, a fellow by the name of Willy Lages. He was later convicted of crimes. I don't think it was executed. I think he had a life sentence and died in prison.

56:08 Lou de Beer: Okay next was our turn, our turn meaning my mother and my two brothers. The first place of, what happened was we got a knock. Oh again, it was about six in the morning, we had a - morning, at night - we just had finished, finished dinner. It was a knock at the door. I opened the door, two people, one in civilian clothing and again one in black; that was the uniform of the Dutch police. So I said, yes, what can I do for you? I said this in Dutch so the policeman said, we need to talk to your mother. So my mother comes out and says, yes? He says, we have orders to arrest you and your children, and you have to leave with us within the next two hours. So my mother said, why? He said, we don't know, those are the orders. So please pack some clothing. You have to go with us. So my mother asked, she went next door said, well can we borrow some suitcases, but we'll be back shortly, or the next few days or so. Because we had no idea what was going to happen. And in the meantime, I was standing there, my younger brother, my mother tried to engage the fellow in in civilian clothing and he pulled out of his uh, uh, pocket what look like these round - let me see if I can see that previously. Yeah, you see these? It's a a warrant, a disc warrant that Gestapo used to identify themselves. Right here it says Geheime Staatspolizei, Secret State Police, a number which identified that individual by a number, and this is the front, the German eagle and the swastika.

- 57:57 Lou de Beer: So we had to leave. They took us by car to a place in Northern Holland right here, called Westerbork. That's the first camp we came to. Westerbork, as you, as shown here, is the collection camp for all Jews which were to be deported east either to the extermination camps or to other concentration camps. We were in one of the barracks, and I certainly don't remember which one, but we were completely separate from the rest of the population in the camp. Here's the commander of the camp, arrested again, tried for crimes but he wasn't heavily sentenced. He's a typical guard, so it's up here. These people right here at the train, we we came up to them - not this particular group, but representative - and I asked him, where are you going? And he said, yeah we're going to take a trip. They told us they're going to send us to the east. But of course, we didn't realize these, these were the Jews which would be being transported east to whatever camp they were designated to go to. Some of them went directly to Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau, some went to Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. And we stayed here, we didn't stay here very long as I recall, three or four weeks. And they transferred us next to a camp just south of Amsterdam, near a small, smaller town called Utrecht. This [Camp Amersfoort] was a notorious the worst concentration camp in the Netherlands.
- 59:45 Lou de Beer: This was truly a a a very strict camp. About 33,000 people that passed through during its duration about five years. And you have an idea what we see, give you an idea what you've got here. This is a, the entrance after liberation. You can see the guard shack. Over here is the typical fencing. This is an electrified fence with about 300 volts ac in about 100 amperes; if you touch that, instantly fatal. Two warning signs is that, right here's the warning. You'll be shot without notice, in German and repeated in Dutch. In other words, if you approached any of these fences to within a certain amount, the guards - and here's the guard tower - uh, we'll immediately shoot without warning. I'd never heard any shots being fired, but that was uh, or was the notice over here. Here, we were on this side over here, and I saw here a group of prisoners lined up. And they were standing there, must have been standing there for many hours. Some of them already had dropped, possibly a, for punishment. And one of the fellows was laying on the ground and this guard came over there and hit him with a shovel.
- 1:01:12 Lou de Beer: Here is uh, some indication of the guard, SS guard company. This is another view of the camp. We lived in a, in a barracks and one side of the barracks were some of the SS guards. So there was a partition between us and the guards. Over here is a detail, work detail, with the SS guards, over here. This is a better picture. The fellow on the right was the camp commandant his name was Karl Berg. He was executed at the end of the war, a real sadist. Here is an interesting item, each prisoner had to wear a patch, usually one on the front and one on the backs. And this allowed the guards to identify who they were. Specifically, here, let's take a look over here. You see a Star of David? This is a star, first, there was a triangle, and superimposed upon that is a yellow triangle, and that signifies he was a

homosexual Jew. So that's how identified. In the camp, you had political prisoners, criminals. You had Russian prisoners, even some Germans who were there as punishment because of the infraction of their rules. We were here for maybe a couple of months and from here, the first camp we come to, the next one is in Germany. This was located [Camp Liebenau] - if I can find it, here is my, right here - in southern Germany. Here's Dachau and we were just west of Dachau, tiny little remote village. This building over here, before we came housed mentally ill German patients, severely mentally ill, and they were administered by nuns, an order of Dutch nuns, German nuns.

1:03:16 Lou de Beer: They removed those people, and they had a euthanasia program, and they killed every one of them, the Germans, because at that time the German philosophy - we don't feed idle mouths. And these people are useless to the German society that they dream they have one day. So they had in there British and American women and young children. There were no guards except a policeman. And this is what, this is not the fellow but this is a standard uh, standard uh, policeman, Schutzpolizei, as they called. And what they did, sometimes they took the kids in the neighboring area and we, a couple of times they were a Hitler youth, and we sang with them, played with them, and sang songs with them. And some of the stuff we heard, you can hear a, hear their young voices. [plays music] Uh, right near that, not far from the town of some historic sites which I visited after the war uh, Hitler's birthplace in Braunau am Inn, about a hundred miles due east of where we're imprisoned. He was born in one of these rooms, one of these rooms, I don't know which one. Over here is the prison he was in when he wrote his uh famous *Mein Kampf* after he was uh, prosecuted for trying to overthrow the Weimar government. And over here's a entrance to Dachau, which was only about 20 miles due east of where we were after liberation. The main, main entrance. Dachau the first concentration camp in Germany.

1:05:46 Lou de Beer: From there, from the place we were in we went to the last camp in Germany and we, we unfortunately we're on a train and we were caught in an air raid. The RAF, the Royal Air Force, was attacking Ulm. Kind of central Germany, Ulm is the birthplace of Albert Einstein. I didn't see Albert Einstein at the time. And there were, the RAF typically drop incendiaries and these big 2,000-pound blockbusters. And the Hitler youth at the station, they were coming off the train and as usually, usual, they were singing. This is strike photo, one of our reconnaissance aircraft to see what damage had been done. In the train, I sat next to a man who wore these. He was sitting on my left. They wear the insignia on the right lapel. My mother was sitting across from me. This compartment very crowded, and next to him, my brother - the younger brother. And this fellow next to me, with the SS on his collar, he started to talk to me. I didn't understand a word he was saying, so my mother translated. He asked, I said, what is he saying? She says, oh he wants to know your name, where you're from, and what are you doing on the train. So my mother explained it to him, in German. So he got up, and about a half an hour later,



he came back with a big basket of food. It was everything and these big greasy sausages - knockwurst, I think they call them - but we ate it because we hadn't eaten in quite a while. And then my mother distributed it among the other people in the compartment.

1:07:43 Lou de Beer: Excuse me, so that, that trip did not end there because we had to get off the train. They would not let us any further. Everybody had to get off the train because tracks ahead had been heavily damaged. So we had to stay in the town oh, about four or five days and this is what we saw in the town - utter destruction. If I can do it, there it is. This photograph, or this motion picture, was actually taken by a combat photographers of the US [United States] Seventh Army after we have captured the city. But we were in a building similar to what you're seeing here, and we walked around and uh, you could barely walk on the streets because the rubble hadn't been cleared as a result of the heavy raids. And we did see at one corner, we heard these youngsters singing again, and also they had, the Germans had these gigantic signs. I couldn't read them, so the next day my mother and I, and myself and my younger brother were walking, I asked her what does it say? And she said, our walls are broken but not our hearts. Unsere Mauren brachen aber unsere Herzen nicht. This is part of the morale building. They had them all over the place, on buildings, everywhere. So when we finally got back on the train, we came to our final destination, the camp, Camp Vittel. Camp Vittel, in France, which was located approximately here - where it says Vittel - was a large internment camp. There's a difference between concentration and internment. Internment camps are for civilian, civilians who are at war with a particular country, and the concentration camps were for a completely different reason.

1:09:51 Lou de Beer: This is a Commandant of the camp, a captain, over age captain. The entire guard company was overage, or most of them were over age because there was not much to do to guard a bunch of older people and women with children. This is the walkway we had to go over from our place. They had requisitioned a whole bunch of uh, hotels. There was a guard. At night they would close these gates; guards would stand on each end. One of the problems in the camp was food. It was not too bad in the beginning when we were there. We were there about a year and a half to two years, but our food was complemented by these prisoner - you can read it - American Red Cross prisoner of war food packages. And of course the contents uh, there were American cigarettes in there which is like gold. Later on, we bribed the guards so that we get some fresh, fresh material from the French farmers who used to come to the, come to the fences. But this was very late when Germany was certain to lose the war. So the the camp uh, guard component, as well as the Commandant, didn't really enforce most of the rules they should have. Here was Liberation Day. French and American units from Patton's Third Army liberated the camp. Down here, I was standing with my father, mother, and my younger brother, watched this Sherman tank come in. We were living in that hotel right here and it was a very joyous occasion.

- 1:11:36 Lou de Beer: These are some of the people behind the barbed wire, and you can see it is an American soldier, uh, talking to the people behind. Here's the amtrak over, a track vehicle over here. And somehow, somebody found an American flag and when there were a great deal, day of joy, we were able to open the gates walk outside, which we hadn't done for quite a few years. And one of the things, one of the um, one of the things we did have in the camp was there were a number of American nuns who held school for the younger people. I learned to play the rudiments of the violin in the camp. One of the nuns says, pretty good violinist. So she taught me some basics. I was never really good at it, was I Jim? Here are the nuns. I don't know what order they were. They were very uh, very helpful, held school, very strict, strict nuns. And here is a picture of some of the guards taken into captivity by the fellow with the rifle, is one of your French Resistance members. Finally, we were, left the camp and we were transported to a very small town in southern France for processing. We underwent very lengthy and strict medical examinations because a lot of people had become ill for a variety of reasons. Incidentally, it was in this camp that my father and my older brother and us were reunited, finally, after, I guess, about two and a half years. Because we lost complete track of my father and and my older brother, so we didn't have any idea where they were. They were, from what my mother told me, they were okay as far as physically is concerned, but I think it affected my older brother's health very badly.
- 1:13:49 Lou de Beer: What you see here is - get a little bit pick, a little bit better picture - this is me, short pants. This is my younger brother, real feisty little guy, and once we're through there they put us on a ship at Marseille for passage to the United States. And I remember when we walked aboard the uh, the ship - which I think I have a picture of - here, yeah. It's the SS Gripsholm, loaded with American troops returning from the war zone. I remember walking onto that ship, into the dining room, huge tables with white cloths, milk, butter, fresh fruit, you know, because we hadn't seen anything like that for years. And of course, we got sick for three days because we have much too much. I remember I had to go to the railing a number of times because my, you know, the food, my body wasn't used to that. But what, that was terrific. Then we landed in the harbor, in Boston Harbor, on Christmas Eve in 1944. And the first thing I noticed, all the lights were on, because in Europe during the war everything had to be out, to prevent the Allies from using it as a beacon, any ground, you know, large concentration of of lights. So what happened was, we stayed in Boston for a little while. My father went ahead got a job and we moved into the South Bronx, into a all-Italian working neighborhood, and I went to high school. My brother, younger brother, and I went to high, grade school, and then high school.
- 1:15:30 Lou de Beer: Fast forward, finished high school, the Korean War was on, and what happened was - here I am, a little younger as you can see - and my younger brother uh, enlisted. He did a couple of months later. We both enlisted in a Marine Corps. I did basic training on the East Coast at Parris Island, was shipped to, to the West

Coast, Camp Pendleton, underwent weapons trading and infantry tactics, and assaulted the beaches in Coronado as part of the amphibious assault exercises. And uh, then we, they put us on a boat to Korea and here we are debarking from this big troop ship at Busan, which is very, very end for the base of uh, of Korea. This is me in the field. I'm carrying a 45 over here, and a 30 caliber carbine, and my first job was as a mortar man in a heavy mortar crew. 4.85-inch, 4.2-inch mortar - a mortar is a tube that sits like this, you drop the shells in from the front, and they're supposed to come out - sometimes they don't. And then I was transferred to a frontline infantry unit as a radio operator, company radio operator. And that's not me, but that's typically what I had on my back, a radio. And this is an idea of the front line. This is some of the troops in action. We used strictly Second World War equipment. Some other combat pictures. Here's a an incident which I saw a fair amount of uh, young marines lying dead under these tarps with a chaplain uh, here. This is a first marine division. It's my division that liberated Seoul. You can see us here, fixed bayonet. This when I was in Seoul, Korea on a temporary leave for a couple of days. They let us go to Seoul, kind of a relief.

1:17:44 Lou de Beer: Finally, was time to come home. The ship was sailed - and this is actually going out, I didn't have a picture going in - this is a troop ship coming back to the United States under the Golden Gate. It was a beautiful sight to see. You look up, you see the Golden Gate, and we're all aboard the ship. And after some leave, I was assigned to the Second Marine Division which is at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina as a machine gunner, and a radio operator, and what they call an amtrak, an amphibious tractor, which is a vehicle that comes out of the water and goes on to land. While I was there, a telegram said, come home right away. Which I did, and my brother, young Marina died. He was 20 years old. This is the funeral, a very moving and very simple funeral. The weapons you see are not of that date. These are much newer, but these are, this is representative. We had a bugle, bugler blowing *Taps*. He's buried in a military cemetery on the East Coast. After that, I got married. Here is my wife, born in France, an American citizen. She also underwent the requirement to get out of France when the Germans invaded France, and she and her family moved to Morocco. That's me a little when we're a little younger.

1:19:12 Lou de Beer: I went to school, then to graduate school, then I worked on a, our first ICBM [Inter-continental Ballistic Missile] system. As an engineer, I was responsible for the launch control with, of our Strategic Air Command bases, and the nuclear warhead which sits up here. Then finally, then my career joined an organization called the National Security Agency, headquarters at Fort Meade. Everybody know what NSA does? Okay, or at least you have an idea, right? It's one of our premier intelligence agencies. Here I'm being awarded a um, I think it was a civilian meritorious service award by the deputy director. It's my wife me and two friends. And this is our sister agency, and we often work together, CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] at Langley [Virginia]. A brief view of where we were during my 30 more more years of work. We lived and worked, or I lived and worked in Europe. I lived

and worked in Morocco, right here. Lived and worked in South Africa during the apartheid era, which is a story in all its own - very rigid system of racial segregation - and traveled and worked extensively in a lot of the African nations, both on the West Coast and the East Coast, and some other areas. And this is a picture of my mother. My mother, as you can see this is a wedding, a very determined. She was not afraid of anything, very determined look on her face. It says, I'm going to make this marriage work, or else. And this is the picture again, this is my mother and my older brother. That's it. Then, of course, these are only highlights because each one of these items, you know, you can expand upon for hours. That kind of is an overview of what, what I did for the past x number of years.

1:21:27 Susanne Hillman: Thank you Lou for this very interesting, uh please wait. I'm sure some people will have questions. Yes. So we now take questions uh, for a few minutes.

1:21:39 Lou de Beer: Anybody have any questions?

1:21:41 Susanne Hillman: Uh, please wait until you get the microphone.

1:21:46 Lou de Beer: Um, oh, she has a question.

1:21:47 Speaker 1: Yes. After everything you've been through, do you take anything for granted now?

1:22:01 Lou de Beer: Nothing. I don't take anything for granted. I tell you the truth, I was, my wife and I were talking about this and I said, you know, you went through hell too in a way. Because, as I mentioned, she - when the Germans invaded France she, her mother was a very determined strong woman also. They said we're not going to stay here, and be captured, or be confined in any way. So they went to Morocco. Her father actually was, I married the general's daughter. He was a brigadier general in the French Army and during the Algerian War, he commanded the French and foreign legionnaire troops during their insurrection. You know, they had a revolt in Algeria that ended in independence for Algeria, because Algeria was a territory belonging to France. But to answer your question, I don't take anything for granted. No, I frankly I'm, I'm very grateful I'm alive, to tell you the truth. You know it's uh, I mean, I didn't even begin to tell you what uh, the organization I just put up. That's a whole different chapter. But I, I can't get into that. Uh, what I'm referring to is NSA.

1:23:17 Speaker 1: Thank you.

1:23:19 Susanne Hillman: Another question?

1:23:21 Speaker 2: Yeah, a little more of the story of your, of your father, uh that trail of your father and when you finally ended up seeing him again, and where he'd all been. And, and a little more of his story.

- 1:23:34 Speaker 3: Did you know you were going to see him, or did you just bump into him?
- 1:23:39 Lou de Beer: Uh, oh you mean over here? Oh well uh, yeah. I didn't have too many pictures of him frankly because none of them existed. They only, I had some other pictures mostly in the United States, but they didn't have any pictures in Europe. You see, when the Germans invaded, of course, we didn't see my father anymore, at all. My father did - a little about his background - he um, he was in the diamond business. So at that time, before the war, Amsterdam and Antwerp, in Belgium, where the prime centers - this is uh decorative jewelry - I'm not talking about industrial diamonds. So he used to do a lot of traveling. He had to go from Amsterdam to, to Antwerp and often we didn't see a lot of him when he was working. Now during the war what happened is that that particular aspect of diamonds, making diamonds for jewelry, disappeared. And then he did work in industrial diamonds, much of that went to Germany to feed their war effort. Many of the factories in the occupied countries were turned into production centers for German, for the German armed forces. And he was, you know, he was forced to, well if he didn't want to work, you don't eat. He wouldn't get paid. But I don't have that many pictures of him actually.
- 1:25:01 Speaker 4: Yeah, hi. Thank you for your talk. Um, just a quick question. You had a, you mentioned the uh, contact you had with Jews in the camp in the Netherlands. They were on their way to deportation to Eastern Europe and Europe.
- 1:25:20 Lou de Beer: Could you repeat, I have a hearing problem from Korea. That's where I got this from. Go ahead.
- 1:25:27 Speaker 4: You mentioned um, your time in the camp in the Netherlands, the first camp, and that you met Jews that were on the way like, being deported to Eastern Europe at the time.
- 1:25:37 Lou de Beer: Oh, you mean that picture I showed?
- 1:25:39 Speaker 4: Right
- 1:25:40 Lou de Beer: You mean, indicate, while I was in the camps?
- 1:25:42 Speaker 4: Right, yeah, and, my question was, yeah the question is when did you first realize what was going to happen to them? Did, because, at the time you um, you said they were deported East. So they weren't aware of, that they were being deported to the death camps.
- 1:26:00 Lou de Beer: I don't know if they were actually, when, when I asked them where are you going, as I remember, a woman uh, in fact, when I went up there was a little fence. Yeah, sorry. I remember when I went up to this group of people, there was a kind of a, a low uh, fence between where it was kind of up the hill because of the embankment there. They were, the railroad cars were up there, as I recall. So I, I

stopped at, I didn't go over the fence. So when I talked to the people I talked to, remember it was a woman, she was carrying a bag, and it was a little kid with her, and then some other people came around. And I remember asking, where are you going? And they said, well they told us we're going to be resettled, or words to that effect. I don't remember the exact. She said it in Dutch, of course. So when I got back and I asked my mother, why are these people, you know, what are they leaving? And my mother said, I really don't know. And uh, so I, I'd never - remember now, the age I'm at - all this, what you're hearing from me now, obviously, came only uh, at my maturity, so to speak. When I began to really realize what was going on, or what had happened in Europe at that time, all the things I saw in the street. In fact, I saw in the Jewish neighborhood what happened was sometimes the Dutch Fascist Party had a wing attached called the WA [Weerbaarheidsafdeling], or Va-ah, which is kind of a bunch of thugs that would beat up people. And they'd go into the Jewish neighborhood. I remember I was standing near one of them, and there was a group of people running, and they hit. You know, I was just a kid and I remember, almost fell over, and they were running into the street. And what I found out about later, they'd gone into the Jewish neighborhood, and the young Jewish boys - at least this is what my father told me - defended themselves against his these, these thugs, and a lot of them got hurt. Both sides got hurt.

1:28:07 Lou de Beer: And so beyond that, see a lot of these impressions, of course, are, become more vivid when I began to read about it, and about the background. It began to make sense because a lot of this stuff, I didn't make, I was at the time, we came, by the time I came to the United States I think it was 13 years old. Although by that time, you know, you have a fair sense of your surroundings. But prior to that? Another thing that might be of interest, the school I was in, every day children would disappear, every day. So I asked my mother. Said, how come all these children, you know, every day there were more children gone? She says because they're Jewish. And that didn't mean anything to me. So what happened was we, what the school did, they started to write letters to Westerbork, on the concentration, where they took the Jews then send them East and, in the hope that the children, or the whoever read it. A whole bunch of, each one of the kids had to write something and made a little drawing. And pretty soon we got some answers back, letters from Westerbork it was called. In fact, I think somebody in the Netherlands actually got a hold of some of those letters and and published them. We had a whole, I had a whole bunch of them, but some of that stuff disappeared. And the reason, you know, you might say, well why would the Germans permit something like that? Because what they were trying to do, I found out of course much later, they didn't want any trouble at all in those centers. They make it, you know, make it look good, you're just being resettled, nothing's going to happen to you - to keep the people at ease. Because the last thing they wanted is a panic, you know. That wouldn't look too good because Holland is a small country, and it's not like going out to Poland. The reason they built the extermination centers out in the East, more in Poland, because they could find areas which were not, essentially not populated like they

are in Holland. Holland's a very densely populated country. So we wrote those little letters to the children, and we got them, got some answers back also. Anybody else have any? Yep.

1:30:24 Speaker 5: Yes um, I want to ask you uh, have you ever heard of a novel named *Mother Night*? It was published in 1962.

1:30:31 Lou de Beer: uh, what?

1:30:32 Speaker 5: *Mother Night* you know is uh, by uh, Kurt Vonnegut. It's about an American who gets stuck in uh, Germany uh, during World War II, and he becomes an announcer for the uh, for the Germans. Kind of like a German-American version of Tokyo Rose. You know, kind of a propaganda thing. But um, then the OSS [Office of Strategic Services], which is a predecessor the CIA, they contact him and they get him to start uh, delivering coded messages in the uh, the um, broadcast he's doing from Germany. So he ends up working for the Allies. You might read it. [crosstalk] kind of interesting because it's a little similar to your story that he was an American who was stuck in Germany uh, during the war.

1:31:13 Speaker 6: I just have a quick question if you care to uh, comment. So Wernher von Braun of course helped to design the ICBM rocket. I don't know if you had any interface with him, or any thoughts, or comments.

1:31:30 Lou de Beer: No, of course, I knew of him. Yeah, he was down at the uh, Huntsville Arsenal in Alabama. No. Yeah, they brought him - not just him but a whole bunch of German scientists - because the Russians. Russians were doing the same thing on their side.

1:31:45 Speaker 6: They were all war criminals.

1:31:48 Lou de Beer: Yeah, von Braun was a member of the SS. He tried to hide it, and he tried to hide the fact that he sometimes wore the SS uniform. He had the rank of major, as I recall, SS in the SS.

1:32:01 Speaker 7: Oh, I just wanted to ask did music help you persevere? Was there, did you have enough uh, contact with your violin? Or you just -

1:32:15 Lou de Beer: Oh no. No, no. The nun, the only. You mean in the camp? No, what I got from the nun, and she was very strict, learn the scales. And I hated playing scales. And she said you can't play the violin without playing scales. And she's right of course, but she was very, very good in how to hold the bow, get some tone production out of it, etc. I enjoyed it.

1:32:38 Speaker 7: Did it give you more of a feeling for music at that point or did it just enter in until later?

- 1:32:44 Lou de Beer: Later, later really. I didn't really know what I was doing. I didn't know what music really was at that time. Anybody, yes?
- 1:32:52 Speaker 8: You referred to Jim earlier. Who is Jim?
- 1:32:56 Lou de Beer: Jim? Oh, that's uh, Jim uh, he, he was one of my instructors in violin here. In fact, we played in the orchestra that he was in here locally. The University of San Diego, wasn't it? Yeah, anybody else?
- 1:33:12 Susanne Hillman: Actually, I would like to ask a question. How would you say has this experience, of being a child, you know going through these various camps, how did it affect your life? I mean, did it have a lasting impact, you know, being separated from your father?
- 1:33:28 Lou de Beer: Yes, right. Well, you know, I look at it this way, and this is of course one of the great controversies. I think that you're familiar with the famous, the banality of evil statement of Hannah Arendt. You remember, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*? You know, she really got raked over the coals for saying that because this implied that you can't, everybody is guilty to a certain, or it can happen anytime. The banality of course meaning it's common. And I believe that. You can see it happening in the world right now. And what I learned from all that experience and, and both from the European experience and then away from the combat I was in, is that I think man is able, capable of anything. The veneer of civilization is about this thin, and I think in uh, he perhaps I say, take this, I shouldn't say this, but this is what I believe. I think all of us, including myself, depending on the circumstances are capable of the most incredible crimes. Must be true if you look at history already, and it goes on today every single day. I'm, now certainly not absolving the Germans from the guilt because, of course, they were the most extreme of all, but and I think that's a lesson I really took away from, and same in when I was in Korea. You know same, same, essentially the same thing. That's my view and people may disagree with me, but I think that's. Yeah do, oh I have a second over here. Yes? Any other questions?
- 1:35:12 Speaker 9: Oh yes, I have a question. Just here, um, I know during the war there were a bunch of Japanese Americans who were in internment camps here in the US. I'm just wondering if you've met some of them over the years.
- 1:35:27 Lou de Beer: I did, I did. In fact when I was in Korea in - not in my company but one of the other companies - there were three Japanese Americans and their parents had been in the internment camps right here in California. There was a, at Manzanar, I believe it was up, a little further up north in uh, in California. And I asked him about that. That's a good question. I said, how were you treated there? He says, he said the family was well treated. They were not abused but they were confined. And the thing that they, they, the families, all of them felt that they were American citizens. Why are they doing this this to us? You know, why was this



necessary? It was never proven that any Japanese, of Japanese descent, did any espionage, or committed any acts against the United States. None of them. But at the time, of course, the people were scared to death on the West Coast. So they didn't know what was going to happen, but I did know them. I didn't know them real well. One of them as I recall was a Lance Corporal, and one of them was a medic, or he worked with the Navy medics. I remember yeah, I was, I had a couple of conversations with them. Very pleasant guys and that's what they that guy told me. I don't have much insight into that part of American history.

1:36:55 Susanne Hillman: Well thank you all for coming. Thank you, Lou, and I hope we'll see you all in January.